HORATIUS BONAR, 1808 - 1889: HYMN-WRITER, THEOLOGIAN, PREACHER, CHURCHMAN; A STUDY OF HIS RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND ACTIVITY.

by

Benjamin Ray Oliphint

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PREFACE

The study of a great servant of Christ is always an inspiring and rewarding experience. In suggesting Horatius Bonar as a possible subject of research, the Very Reverend Principal Hugh Watt, D.D., D. Litt., has opened the way into the study of a life and work which has proved to be a real adventure of faith. For the Principal's wise and sympathic counsel, I am deeply grateful. I am indebted to the Reverend Professor W. S. Tyndal, O.B.E., D.D., under whose supervision this study has been written, for his kindness in reading the manuscript and for offering valuable criticism and encouragement. Grateful acknowledgement is given to the Reverend Professor G. T. Thomson, D.D., for reading some of the following pages. My sincere thanks are extended also to the Reverend Professor J. B. Primrose, M.A., Librarian of New College, and Miss Erna R. Leslie, M.A., B. Com., for their assistance and helpful suggestions. In addition, the staffs of the National Library of Scotland, the Edinburgh University Library, the Glasgow University Library, the Kelso Public Library, and the British Museum, have been helpful in providing research material.

In order to be consistent I have used American spelling, punctuation, and grammar throughout, except in direct quotations where I have endeavored to be faithful to the original text.

B. R. O.

Edinburgh
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Needs there the praise of the love-written record,
The name and the epitaph graved on the stone?
The things we have lived for, - let them be our story,
We ourselves but remembered by what we have done.

Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken,
Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,
Shall pass on to ages; all about me forgotten,
Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.

So let my living be, so be my dying;
So let my name lie, unblazoned, unknown;
Unpraised and unmissed, I shall still be remembered;
Yes, - but remembered by what I have done.

- Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF HORATIUS BONAR

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Horatius Bonar was born into one of the most famous manse families in the history of Scotland.[1] His great-great grandfather, John Bonar, served the quiet country parish of Torphichen in West Lothian for fifty-four years after his ordination in 1693. He was an intimate friend of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine. During the trying period which preceded the Revolution of 1688, he stood for the cause of Presbyterianism in spite of the efforts of his father and the principal of his college at St. Andrews to induce him to become an Episcopalian. In 1712 he refused to take the oath of abjuration, and later when the harsh measures agitated in 1732 and 1733 gave rise to the Secession, he defended the censured ministers, although deeply regretful of their separation from the Church. His great-grandfather, also named John Bonar, was ordained minister of Fetlar in Shetland in 1729, and was distinguished as a classical and Oriental scholar, an impressive preacher, and a composer of poetical pieces. His son, John Bonar, who was the

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[1]For a full history of the name of Bonar in Scotland, see William Anderson, The Scottish Nation, III, 686-689.

grandfather of Horatius, was minister first at Cockpen and then at Perth. He was noted in his day for a small book written in 1750 on The Conduct and Character of Judas Iscariot. Although Horatius' own father followed an older brother into the Excise office, an uncle, Archibald Bonar, carried on the family tradition as minister of Cramond. During his own lifetime, Horatius, his two brothers John James and Andrew, and two cousins John and Andrew Redman, all had distinguished careers in the minstry. This long record of service, almost unparalleled in the annals of the Church of Scotland, came to a close in 1930 with the death of Horatius' son, Horatius Ninian Bonar, who served as minister of Salton and in the home mission work in Edinburgh.[2]

Horatius' father, James Bonar, was the son of John Bonar of Cockpen and Perth, and was born in Perth in 1757.[3] Described as "cheerful, sagacious, devout, and consistent,"[4] he became Second Solicitor of Excise for Scotland, and was distinguished for his literary and cultural attainments. Besides contributing articles on political economy to the Edinburgh Encyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia Britannica, he

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[2]For the record of John Bonar of Torphichen and his descendants who were ministers, see A.W. Fergusson, Sons of the Manse, pp. 44-47; Horatius Bonar, D.D., A Memorial (hereafter referred to as Memorial), p. 114f.

[3]For the life of James Bonar, see Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, editors, Dictionary of National Biography, II, 797-798.

[4]John Brownlie, The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church Hymnary, p. 226.

was the author of a book entitled Disquisitions on the Origin and Radical Sense of the Greek Prepositions which was published in 1805. He was one of the founders of the Astronomical Institute in Edinburgh, secretary of the Speculative Society, and a member of several other literary and benevolent institutions. An office-bearer in Lady Glenorchy's Chapel and an elder in the Edinburgh Presbytery, he found time to be an active churchman. In 1805 he took a stand with Sir Henry Moncreiff and others in dissenting from the decision of the Presbytery to interfere with the election of Mr. John Leslie to the Chair of Mathematics in Edinburgh University. A fellow office-bearer in Lady Glenorchy's Chapel, Mr. Ebenezer Mason, said of him after his premature death: "A more valuable life I cannot name in the city, to his large family and to a wide circle of friends; a distinguished scholar, and a member of almost all the literary societies in Edinburgh."[5]

Marjory Maitland, Horatius' mother, married James Bonar in 1797, and was noted for her piety and devotion to her family. Their home stood in Paterson's Court, Old Broughton, "nearly alone in its garden, on the northern limit of Edinburgh, and from it, green fields and hedges sloped away to the sea."[6] It was an old-fashioned roomy house which Marjory Bonar soon filled with the shouts of

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[5]Marjory Bonar, ed., Andrew A. Bonar, Diary and Letters, p. ix.

[6]Mary Bonar Dodds, "Horatius Bonar," The Sunday Magazine (hereafter referred to as Bonar), p. 198.

eleven children. Three of them died in infancy, but five sons and three daughters grew to maturity. On all of them Mrs. Bonar impressed her childlike faith and exercised great influence. Each of the children was trained in habits of obedience and reverence without the loss of childhood freedom and happiness.

Horatius, the sixth son, was born on December 19, 1808, and seems to have passed his childhood years with great happiness. Year later he was to think of his home with nostalgia:

I miss the dear paternal dwelling,
Which mem'ry still undimm'd recalls,
A thousand early stories telling,
I miss the venerable walls.

I miss the chamber of my childhood,
I miss the shade of boyhood's tree,
The glen, the path, the cliff, the wild-wood,
The music of the well-known sea.

I miss the ivied haunt of moonlight,
I miss the forest and the stream,
I miss the fragrant grove of noonlight,
I miss our mountain's sunset gleam.

I miss the green slope, where reposing
I mused upon the near and far,
Marked, one by one, each floweret closing,
Watched, one by one, each opening star.

I miss the well-remembered faces,
The voices, forms of fresher days;
Time ploughs not up these deep-drawn traces,
These lines no ages can erase.[7]

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[7] Horatius Bonar, Hymns of Faith and Hope (hereafter referred to as Faith and Hope), I, 8f. Three volumes of hymns bearing this title were published by Bonar in 1857, 1861, 1866.

He was particularly devoted to his mother, and when he left Edinburgh for Kelso in 1837, wrote to her once a week until her death in 1854, often enclosing an original meditation or hymn to comfort her. The tenderness of his love for her is beautifully expressed in these lines:

> Meek with no common meekness, self-denied,
> Mindful of all around, she walked in light,
> A stranger here, her fellowships above,
> Mother of children who rise up to bless her,
> And to tread softly in her steps of peace.
> My spirit clung to her, and in the night
> Or shaded nook of life still found in her,
> When other lights went out or were obscured,
> An inextinguishable joy; as yon clear star
> Of the deep sky, the star that never sets,
> Midnight's lone darling, so was she to me.[8]

The Bonar family were faithful members of Lady Glenorchy's Chapel, built by Lady Glenorchy in 1774, and connected with the Church of Scotland. Horatius' father and his brother James were both successively elders in the Chapel, and many other relatives were intimately connected with it. The minister of the Chapel, Dr. Thomas Snell Jones, was a man of strong, though somewhat eccentric, personality, who had great influence over the family. Horatius and his brothers and sisters received their early religious training in the Chapel, as well as regular Biblical instruction on Sunday evenings at home from their father. A period of

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[8] Horatius Bonar, My Old Letters (hereafter referred to as Old Letters), p. 252f. There are other touching references to his family in Book X, pp. 251-284.

family prayers and Bible reading was also observed in the home every morning and evening. Growing up in this deeply religious environment made an early mark on young Bonar. Long afterward he spoke his gratitude:

> I thank Thee for a holy ancestry;
> I bless Thee for a godly parentage;
> For seeds of truth and light and purity,
> Sown in this heart from childhood's earliest age.
>
> For word and church and watchful ministry,-
> The beacon and the tutor and the guide;
> For the parental hand and lip and eye,
> That kept me far from snares on every side.
>
> I thank Thee for a true and noble creed,
> For wisdom, poetry, and gentle song;
> For the bright flower, and the wayside weed,
> The friendship of the kind and brave and strong.[9]

James Bonar died suddenly in March 1821, leaving the family to the care of their mother and their eldest brother James. His father's death came as a great shock to twelve year old Horatius:

> 'First bitter drop in the sweet cup of youth!
> My memory goes back to the chill hour,
> When he to whom my reverence and love
> Had early linked themselves went up from us
> To join the heavenly household, ere yet age
> Had crushed him with her threescore years and ten;
> All his large learning gathered richly round him,
> And his calm faith, that sought the things unseen,
> Lifting him upward, as he walked beneath
> The shadow of the cross, - bright as bright noon
> In all the purity of noble life,
> And all the goodness which makes home a heaven,
> And all the happy wisdom which leads on
> The young and buoyant in their fervent course,
> When the ripe words dropped ripely from his lips,
> As autumn's fruit falls from the laden tree.[10]

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[9] Faith and Hope, III, 131f.

[10] Old Letters, p. 251.

James became a second father to the smaller children. He continued the religious training in the home and was greatly loved by all the children to whom he was a real friend and companion. Horatius had a genuine affection for him and was grateful for his watchful guidance:

> 'Him too can I forget, a second father,
> Who, when the hand paternal was unclasped
> By death, took up the hands of tender boyhood,
> And led us on in goodness and in truth?[11]

In addition to the loss of his father and three of his small brothers and sisters, another event which made a lasting impression on young Bonar was the singularly happy death of his eldest sister Marjory, struck down by typhus fever in the year 1822 when she was about twenty-four years of age. Shortly before her death, with the entire family gathered around the bedside, she asked her mother to help her repeat the hymn 'There is a land of pure delight,' and these verses ever after had tender associations for the family. Such scenes and recollections from his early childhood greatly contributed to making the rather quiet, serious-minded, spiritually-awakened youth that Horatius was to become.

His life was intimately linked with that of two of his brothers, John James and Andrew Alexander, both of whom had outstanding careers as ministers. The older brother, John James, completed his divinity studies in Edinburgh University

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[11] Ibid., p. 253.

and went as assistant in Leven in 1829. Several years later he went to Greenock as minister of St. Andrew's Parish where he remained until his death in 1891. Though less widely known than his two brothers, he won distinction for his wide scholarship and the eloquence of his preaching.[12] Andrew entered the ministry only a year after Horatius, being ordained minister of Collace in 1838. In 1856 he went to Finnieston Place Church in Glasgow where he exerted a tremendous influence until his death in 1892. Well known as the friend and biographer of RobertMurray M'Cheyne, he received the degree of D. D. from Edinburgh University in 1874, and was chosen Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church in 1878.[13] Through a long life of service in the Church the three brothers followed the same course and preached the same doctrines, each with his own special characteristics. They were equally remarkable, in the words of one writer, for the "unity of their principles, and the variety of their gifts."[14]

There are few records of Bonar's school or university life.[15] His son states that "he had not a mathematical

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[12]For details of his life and ministerial work, see Jubilee Memorial of Saint Andrew's Parish and Congregation; Parting Memorial to John James Bonar, D.D.

[13]For the life and work of Andrew Bonar, see Fergus Ferguson, The Life of Dr. Andrew A. Bonar; Marjory Bonar, ed., Andrew A. Bonar, D.D., Diary and Letters, op. cit.; Marjory Bonar, ed., Reminiscences of Andrew A. Bonar, D.D.

[14]Parting Memorial to John James Bonar, D.D., op. cit., p. 39.

[15]There is no complete biographical account of Bonar's life. He himself requested in his will that no memoir be written

turn of mind, but early in life showed a great liking for English literature and the ancient classics. At school he was fortunate enough to be under masters who grounded him thoroughly in these latter subjects."[16] Almost seventy years later Bonar recalled his early school days at the funeral of Sir Henry Moncreiff: "In the October of 1817, Sir Henry Moncreiff and I entered the High School together, and sat down in the same class under the same master. We were six years together in that venerable building at the foot of Infirmary Street, now divested of its educational uses and classical dignities. It was a bright warm day, almost like summer, when my father, on whom the weight of nearly three-score years was beginning to tell, led me by the hand, introduced me to the master, and had my name enrolled in the youngest class of that institution, then the only public seminary for the boyhood of Edinburgh in classical learning."[17] He

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of him. For some partial accounts of his life and work, see Memorial; Memories of Dr. Horatius Bonar, by Relatives and Public Men, Addresses delivered at the Centenary Celebrations (hereafter referred to as Memories); Sidney Lee, ed., Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, I, 231-232; James A. Wylie, Disruption Worthies, A Memorial of 1843, pp. 39-46; Hew Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae, The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation, II, 74f.; Horatius Ninian Bonar, ed., Hymns by Horatius Bonar (hereafter referred to as Hymns), pp. v-xxxix; Thomas Brown, "Our Great Hymn-Writer," The Free Church of Scotland Monthly, November 1, 1889, pp. 329-330; "Horatius Bonar," The Scotsman, August 1, 1889, December 19, 1908; Ministerial Jubilee of Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D. (hereafter referred to as Jubilee); Bonar; W. Robertson Nicoll, Princes of the Church, pp. 16-21.

[16] Hymns, p. v. [17] Horatius Bonar, "The One Church of God," Funeral Sermon in Connection with the Death of Sir Henry Moncreiff, D.D., p. 12.

seems to have been a good student but did not carry away any prizes or honors as did his brother Andrew.[18] He finished at Edinburgh High School in 1823, and that autumn matriculated in Edinburgh University as a student in literature when he was almost sixteen years of age.[19] Showing an early interest in writing verse, he soon became one of the editors or the student's magazine, The College Observer, and several of his poems began to appear in it after November 1827. The titles of some of these pieces give an indication, surprising at that early age, of his very serious outlook on life: 'All that's Bright must Fade'; 'The Lonely Hearth'; 'The Departed'; 'Our Homes'; and 'Sunrise.' His last piece in this student publication was a semi-editoral valedictory poem, written in February 1828, and entitled 'Farewell.' Part of it runs as follows:

> And ye too, Academics, parting thus,
> Farewell! And when, in future days,
> The dreams of other hours come over us
> Like breathings of the Spring, or twilight rays,
> The record of gone glory, - holy lays,
> Of deep-toned melody, that slowly swell
> O'er the dark spirit, telling of old ways
> When our youth's dew all clearly on us fell,
> Forget us not; and now, once more, companions,
> fare-ye-well![20]

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[18] See William Steven, The History of the High School of Edinburgh, Appendix, p. 139.

[19] See The Matriculation Roll of the University of Edinburgh, 1811-1829, III, 918, 937, 955, 972, 987. Bonar matriculated from 1823 to 1828 in literature, but there is no account of his graduation from the University, see A Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties of Arts, Divinity, and Law, of the University of Edinburgh since its Foundation.

[20] See Hymns, pp. v-ix.

After finishing his undergraduate studies in 1828, Bonar decided to devote himself to the work of the ministry. That autumn he enrolled in the Divinity Hall of the University for further studies. He could not have come at a more fortunate time, for here he was to study under "the greatest man he had ever met"[21] -- Thomas Chalmers. Bonar and Chalmers came to the Divinity Hall at the same time: the former as an eager young student of divinity, the latter in the zenith of his brilliant career as Professor of Theology. Bonar was present at Chalmers' introductory lecture and joined in the enthusiastic response to his fresh and vital approach to theology. In a speech on the Centenary of Chalmers' birth, he recalled his impression of the occasion: "The reminiscences of his introductory lecture are yet fresh to me; and memory, aided by old note-books still preserved, as relics of those times, can even now, with some measure of vividness, recall the impression of that hour in which we heard the first utterance of a voice which was to tell not only on our student life, but on our whole ministerial careers. Half a century has gone by since then; but who can say how much of the earnest and noble work done during it is to be traced to that hour; and how many of the men who in that notable period have done true service for God and His Church, owed their first impulses to the words then so fervently spoken."[22] Chalmers' eloquent lectures came as a

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[21] "Horatius Bonar," The Scotsman, December 19, 1908, op. cit.

[22] Horatius Bonar, Chalmers' Centenary, Unclassified Manuscript, New College Library, p. 1.

refreshing wind to the minds and hearts of his students and imparted an amazing impetus to their ministry. One of his biographers felt this strongly when he exclaimed: "Others have amassed larger stores of learning, and conveyed them to their students in more comprehensive and compendious forms. But who ever lit up the evidences and truths of Christianity with a light so attractive; and who ever filled the youthful breasts of those who were afterwards to occupy the pulpits of the land, with the fire of so generous and so devoted an enthusiasm!"[23] Bonar not only received a thorough grounding from Chalmers in the creed of his Calvinistic forebears, flavored, in the words of James McCosh, "with a more humane and benignant aspect, and with a more thorough conformity to the principles of man's nature,"[24] but he was indebted to him for an enthusiasm and urgency to preach the Gospel which permeated every fibre of his subsequent ministry. In addition, Chalmers' kindly personal interest in him kindled a responsive glow of admiration and affection which lasted all Bonar's life. To Horatius Bonar the name of Thomas Chalmers was "the grandest of a'."[25]

It was during his student days that Bonar was also to receive the stamp of another great Scottish preacher of his time -- Edward Irving. Through Irving's influence Bonar came to believe in those Pre-millennial views which were to become the pivot on which his spiritual life ever afterward

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[23]William Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., L.L.D., IV, 420.

[24]James McCosh, The Scottish Philosophy, p. 401.

[25]Hymns, p. xxxviii.

revolved. During the Assembly week in May 1828, Irving, still in the height of his popularity in Scotland, addressed crowded congregations day after day in St. Cuthbert's, the largest church in Edinburgh. The hour was six o'clock in the morning and the subject was the Apocalypse of John. "I have no hesitation in saying it is quite woeful," notes Dr. Chalmers of his former assistant, "there is power and richness, and gleams of exquisite beauty, but withal, a mysterious and extreme allegorization."[26] In 1829 and 1830 Irving was back at the Assembly again. Dr. Dickson refused him the use of St. Cuthbert's, "upon very reasonable grounds of damage and danger,"[27] but Hope Park Chapel (now Newington and St. Leonard's Parish Church) was granted him, and he again preached to capacity audiences. While spellbound by his powerful delivery, most scoffed at his message. Some, however, accepted his version of the future, and among these was young Bonar. "He listened with his whole heart to the momentous warnings thundered out in the ears of a generation more dead than drowsy,"[28] writes his brother John.

Such views had not been preached in Scotland for over a century, and were generally strange and unwelcome to the ministers and congregations of that day. The Rev. D. M. M'Intyre states, "A certain stigma, as of heresy, was fastened on all who received them: for many years the 'pre-millenarians' were regarded within God's heritage as speckled birds."[29]

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[26] Andrew Landale Drummond, Edward Irving and His Circle, p. 115.

[27] Ibid., p. 116. [28] Memorial, p. 98.

[29] Memories, p. 47.

Andrew Bonar testified in his diary in 1832: "A remark of my brother Horace went far to satisfy me about missionary labour. He spoke about the need of labourers and ministers at home, and the witness for Christ's Second Coming borne by few in this land. That may be part of our work."[30] Bonar himself witnessed to this doctrine with every opportunity which presented itself, disseminating his opinions by voice and pen through all the years of his long ministry. It was a matter of intense personal conviction for him, dominating and coloring all this thinking. In his first sermon at Kelso in 1837, he closed with these words: "And in the prospect of the gathering storm, that is to desolate the earth, foretelling the speedy Advent of the Son of Man, here find security and shelter, - protection and peace; 'for because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly! hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown!'"[31] And his last sermon preached in Edinburgh in 1887, fifty years later, closed with this entreaty: "In an hour when we think not, the Son of man cometh. Gird up your loins. You are living far too like the world. 'Make ready'; for sudden destruction is coming upon an unready world. 'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'"[32]

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[30] Marjory Bonar, ed., Andrew A. Bonar, op. cit., p. 20.

[31] Kelso: The Sermons and Services at the Opening of the North Parish Church, and the Ordination and Introduction of the Rev. Horatius Bonar, the First Minister (hereafter referred to as Kelso), p. 145.

[32] Memorial, p. 85.

In the Divinity Hall he was associated with a group of fellow students who were to become men of influence in the Scottish Church. They formed a society called the "Exegetical Society" which met every Saturday morning at half-past six o'clock "for the purpose of Biblical Criticism, begun and concluded with prayer; in some sort a prayer-meeting over our studies in the Bible."[33] Other members of the group, including the three Bonar brothers, were Robert Murray McCheyne, William Burns, Thomas Brown, Henry Moncreiff, Moody Stuart, Alexander Somerville, Robert Hamilton, John Milne, and Patrick Miller. "In these meetings," notes Thomas Brown, a member of the group, "Horatius Bonar took a prominent place, and his fellow-students soon recognized not only his scholarship and spirituality of mind, but the peculiar earnestness and force with which he urged his views."[34]

On leaving the Divinity Hall Bonar was licensed as a minister by the Edinburgh Presbytery on the 27th of April 1833. He was engaged as assistant to the Rev. James Lewis of St. John's Church in Leith, and placed in charge of the church's mission district. The large district assigned him was one of the slum areas of the city and had a population of more than three thousand. Several Sunday schools were started and his brother Andrew and the Rev. Thomas Smith, later of New College, served as teachers. Bonar gives an interesting account of the first service in the mission hall: "Mr. Lewis had secured a

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[33] Marjory Bonar, ed., Andrew A. Bonar, op. cit., p. 85.

[34] Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 329.

hall, which held about 200, in one of these lanes; and I was to occupy it every Sabbath, forenoon and afternoon, with the Sabbath school in the evening. It had hitherto been used by a small body of Roman Catholics. I had scarcely begun the forenoon service when the door was thrown open, and a furious woman walked in, shouting, 'My curse and the curse of God be upon you.' But there was no disturbance, and the curse did not come; but in many ways, both among old and young, the blessing followed us."[35] He served four years of valuable and evidently fruitful apprenticeship in this church. He not only held preaching services and did house-to-house visitation, but started several Sunday schools which prospered under his direction. Almost three hundred boys and girls were present at the farewell meeting when he was called to Kelso in 1837.

The old border town of Kelso, situated in its lovely setting on the north bank of the Tweed where it meets the Teviot, famed by the genius of Scott and Leyden, was to be Bonar's home for the next twenty-eight years. In November 1837 he was called there as minister of the new North Parish Church, started in connection with Dr. Chalmers' scheme of Church Extension. The church had been made possible largely through the efforts of Mr. James Nisbet, who was born near Kelso and had become a wealthy publisher in London. He had been instrumental in founding the Presbyterian Church in Regent Square in London, and was eager to do something for the church in his native parish.

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[35] Memorial, p. 90.

After securing the consent of the minister of the parish, the Rev. James McCulloch, a site was purchased, and on the third of May 1836 the foundation stone was laid of a church capable of seating eight hundred persons, with a ground floor for school rooms. The striking and picturesque church was built from designs by a Mr. Pilkington, "an architect of boldness and originality."[36] The cost of the building when completed was over three thousand pounds, the greater part of which was either given or collected by Mr. Nisbet, who also subscribed liberally toward the maintenance of the building and the salaries of the minister and two school teachers.

Despite the fears of his brother Andrew that "Horace's millenarian views are likely to keep him from Kelso,"[37] Bonar was elected as minister on September 9, 1837, and ordained to the office of the ministry by the Presbytery of Kelso on the 30th of November, only four days after the opening of the church. On the third of December he entered into his new duties and preached his first sermon "The Door of the Closet Shut; or Prayer and Fasting the Church's Hope of a Revival," taking his text from Mark 9:29. In the first sentence of the sermon he declared the purpose of his ministry: "My dear brethren, I do not come to address you after the manner of man's wisdom, nor with words of human eloquence, but to speak to your souls of the things which concern your eternity; - to stir you up to

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[36] Guide to Kelso: Historical and Descriptive, p. 38. The church was pulled down in 1948 when the congregation united with another.

[37] Marjory Bonar, ed., Andrew A. Bonar, op. cit., p. 56.

seek in good earnest salvation for yourselves and for others."[38] Such impassioned words had an immediate reaction. The Rev. Thomas Brown writes: "No sooner had he begun his work than it was felt that a new power had come to stir the religious life of the old Border town. The gospel which he preached was the same that others had been preaching; but from his lips it seemed to come with peculiar freshness and urgency. . . . Men felt that he had entered the pulpit with a resolute purpose, - he was there to win their souls for Christ, and for nothing else."[39] He drew a clear line between the converted and the unconverted with no middle ground between; but balanced these harsh denunciations with the offer of free and immediate salvation through Christ. Such preaching in that day "came with all the freshness of a revelation," says the Rev. James Johnston, who became a missionary to China through Bonar's ministry, "The clear exhibition of the free Gospel of the grace of God was new and fresh as the dews of the morning, and, to many, who, like myself, had been for years seeking light and groping in the dark, it was welcomed from the first. But, in the case of others, it stirred up the bitterest enmity, and no man was so cordially hated and reviled at first, though so loved and honoured at last."[40] In a short autobiographical paper, prepared for his jubilee celebration, but never completed and never used, Bonar gives his own account of the beginning and character of his ministry: "I found there plenty of work, plenty of workmen,

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[38] Kelso, p. 125.

[39] Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 329.

[40] Jubilee, p. 37.

and plenty of sympathy, - zealous elders, zealous teachers, and zealous friends. The keynote which I struck was, 'Ye must be born again;' and that message found its way into many hearts. It repelled some, but it drew many together, in what I may call the bond of regeneration. . . . Certainly that word did run and was glorified; nor had I ever reason to regret my adoption of this starting-point, or to feel that I had made a mistake in the prominence which I gave to that solemn and searching truth."[41]

A man of extraordinary energy and versatility, Bonar threw himself enthusiastically into his new duties. He preached three times each Sunday, the evening service being for children. The church ran a boarding school for boys and girls, and Bonar often taught the Bible classes. He anticipated the methods of the Evangelical Alliance and other bodies by arranging for eight days or more of united prayer on special subjects. Indefatigable in visiting, he conducted meetings in farm cottages, often preached in the open air, and engaged in a ceaseless round of other activities. The Rev. Duncan Campbell, speaking of his zeal and unrelenting labors, writes: "One said of him that he was 'always visiting,' another that he was 'always preaching,' another that he was 'always writing,' another that he was 'always praying.'"[42] A saintly elder who had been with Bonar during all his Kelso ministry told Dr. Robertson Nicoll how he used to watch Bonar's study window: "The lamp burned far into the night, and early in the morning the worker was again at his

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[41] Memorial, p. 91.

[42] Duncan Campbell, Hymns and Hymn Makers, p. 97.

desk. He allowed himself but a very few hours of sleep. He was always working, and always working for Christ."[43] His fame and popularity grew rapidly and his influence soon permeated the whole district. The Rev. Thomas Brown says of his early ministry: "It is the universal testimony of those who are best acquainted with the facts that the early years of his ministry in Kelso were blessed to a degree not often seen on earth. The church became the spiritual birthplace of souls, and in its services many of God's people found refreshment and strength."[44]

In 1843 Bonar was married to Jane Catherine Lundie, daughter of the Rev. Robert Lundie, former minister at Kelso.[45] As mistress of the manse at Kelso, the place of her birth and early life, and later in Edinburgh, she proved to be a most sympathetic and helpful wife. Bonar speaks of her in tender simile:

> 'One flower I found, and loved above the rest,
> The rose of roses did it seem to me;
> I plucked it from the garden where it grew,
> And brought it gently home to grow in mine.
> You knew its worth and loveliness. Bright eve
> Was that when first she stood beneath my roof
> And lighted up my dwelling, -- fair and young,
> Her lot seemed glad, for holy love was in it,
> That maketh all things bright; our cup ran o'er.[46]

Nine children were born to them, but their happiness was marred by the early death of five of them. Only one son and three daughters survived their parents. Mrs. Bonar wrote religious verse, including the hymn 'Pass away, earthly joy!',

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[43] Memories, p. 100f. [44] Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 329.

[45] For an account of Mrs. Bonar's life, see Edwin F. Hatfield, The Poets of the Church, p. 85.

[46] Old Letters, p. 142.

which first appeared in 1843 in Bonar's collection of hymns entitled Songs for the Wilderness. She died on December 3, 1884, at the age of sixty-four.

It was during these early years in Kelso that the Disruption of 1843 took place. The "Ten Years' Conflict" had so provoked the cleavage between Moderates and Evangelicals that on the 18th of May 1843, the Free Church of Scotland was formed, with over four hundred ministers leaving the Established Church to become a part of this new body. For Bonar the whole controversy involved the crown rights between Christ or the State as Head of the Church. As the editor of the Presbyterian Review, he wrote a series of articles marking every stage of the conflict, writing with great vigor in defense of the spiritual independence of the Church. When the crisis approached he joined with the Rev. Walter Wood of Westruther and other friends in starting The Border Watch, a district newspaper designed to be conducted on lines similar to those of The Witness in Edinburgh. He not only wrote most of the leading articles in this paper, but went all over the border districts arousing the people to his cause. Finally, on the day which rent the Church, he unhesitatingly joined with his brothers and friends in the long procession from St. Andrew's Church to the Canonmills to form the Free Church.

Meantime during those years great revivals of religion had been going on at Kilsyth, Dundee, and elsewhere in Scotland. Bonar had aided the movement with his pen and voice,

but until after the Disruption he had little access to adjoining parishes as most of the ministers were of the Moderate party. Released from the necessity of regarding parochial boundaries, Bonar threw himself into evangelistic work all over the district. Of this work he wrote long afterward: ". . . I found open doors and open ears in that populous district among all ranks of the people. Year after year the work grew and the people flocked to hear."[47] He engaged two evangelists to assist him in the work, a Mr. Stoddert and a Mr. Murray, and of their work he says: "These two were truly the evangelists of the Borders, and traversed the three counties of Roxburgh, Berwick, and Northumberland, with blessed success. . . . whole villages awakened, besides many stray souls, both young and old, gathered into the Church of God from various quarters. . .. Many rebuffs we got, many angry letters, many threats of ecclesiastical censure, much experience of what would now be called 'boycotting'; but in spite of all this the work went on, good was returned for evil, and the evangelists found themselves and their message becoming more and more acceptable."[48] One writer, then a young divinity student, gives a picture of Bonar on the occasion of one of these evangelistic services in a school room on a weekday evening: "There was something about the service, and about the man that made you feel that you were standing on holy ground, and that the service was far above that which usually goes by that name. To give you an idea of the earnest preacher,

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[47] Memorial, p. 91.

[48] Ibid., p. 91f.

imagine before you a youth of slender build, somewhat below the common height, with dark complexion, finely rounded head surmounted with an abundance of auburn locks, large, lustrous eyes full of intelligence and strong emotion and a countenance well defined, every feature indicating a sensitive kindly nature, 'Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought', and you have a glimpse of the Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D., in his youthful prime."[49]

This extensive evangelistic work went on for ten or twelve years with great success, and gave a fresh impetus to the cause of evangelical religion all over the district. Bonar had suffered less in a financial sense from the Disruption than most other ministers of the Free Church, in that he was able to keep his church and obtained freedom to preach in parishes into which he had previously not been able to go. Largely through his efforts new congregations in connection with the Free Church were formed in districts where the ministers had remained in connection with the Established Church. Although it was no easy task to organize congregations and build churches where the ministers and many people were opposed to it, Bonar set himself to the work with great strength and skill. Help was given by many influential farmers in the different localities, and soon congregations and churches were springing up in small communities all over the border region. That his abundant labors in these various efforts were remembered by the people of the district is shown by the statement of Lord Polwarth at Bonar's jubilee:

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[49] Duncan Morrison, The Great Hymns of the Church, p. 226.

"In this district his character is revered, his person beloved, and his words cherished."[50]

Communion seasons were times of special effort by Bonar. People from all around the district flocked into Kelso for the services. Often his two brothers, reciprocating his own visits to their Communion occasions, were present to assist in the preaching. Bonar placed great emphasis on the occasion and often wrote a hymn to be read at the conclusion of the service. After the sermon in the evening of the Communion Sunday, it was his custom to hold a short meeting for special prayers for which many of the members of the congregation remained. One old member, writing of this meeting, says, "Our own Dr. Bonar and the other two Drs. Bonar, sometimes all three together in the pulpit, asked for a special parting blessing, . . . I used to wish that we did not need to go down into the world again, but that we might go straight up into heaven, which seemed so near."[51]

Notwithstanding an ever increasing load of preaching and pastoral duties, Bonar found time for study and writing, and soon a copious stream of both prose and verse began to flow from his pen. Very early in his Kelso years he had begun the publication of a series of tracts entitled the Kelso Tracts.[52] These brief evangelistic messages consisted of extracts from old writers, short sermons by his brother Andrew and other friends, and a great many from his own pen. They met with an

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[50] Jubilee, p. 41.

[51] Memorial, p. 12f.

[52] See Horatius Bonar, The Kelso Tracts.

immediate success. One of them called Believe and Live, with its emphasis on the freeness of the Gospel offer, was regarded by many as dangerous if not heretical teaching.[53] It had a circulation of nearly three hundred thousand copies, almost unprecedented for that time, and is said to have been known and distributed by Queen Victoria.[54]

Encouraged by this popular reception of his work, and doubtless fortunate in having as his friend and benefactor the eminent London publisher, Mr. James Nisbet, Bonar was soon turning out a vast multitude of literary products which lasted through his long ministry. Books, tracts, and hymns continually occupied him, and his pen was never idle. He published a new book almost every year, wrote over six hundred hymns, and became the editor of no less than three magazines: the Presbyterian Review, in Disruption times; the Christian Treasury, from 1857 to 1879; and the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, from 1848 to 1873. It is almost impossible to enumerate the minor books which he published, or the works which he edited with introductions and notes. Almost all of his major books had a wide circulation for that day, and some were translated into several languages. Perhaps his best known one, God's Way of Peace, sold over two hundred and eighty-five thousand copies. Through these various literary efforts, particularly the publication of his hymns, Bonar's name became a household word in many Christian homes in Britain while he was yet a comparatively young man. The Rev. Thomas Brown, writing of this inexhaustible

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[53] See Jubilee, p. 37.

[54] See Memories, p. 57.

flow from Bonar's pen, says: "Few ministers discharging, as Dr. Bonar did, the duties of a laborious pastorate have ever had such a record of original authorship to show, and fewer still could tell of such a reception on the part of the public. It was the outcome of laborious hours in which he consecrated his high literary gifts to the Master's service."[55]

Bonar's unabating labors were recognized in 1853 when he received the D.D. degree from Aberdeen University.

In 1855 he suffered a severe personal illness, and was compelled to suspend his ministry for a time. He used part of this time to make a pilgrimage to Egypt and Palestine, which colored to a great extent all his subsequent ministry and greatly deepened his interest in prophecy.[56] Dr. William C. Prime relates an interesting personal reminiscence of Dr. Bonar at this time: "One dark night in the year 1856, in the earthly city Jerusalem, I wandered into a lighted mission-room on Mount Zion, where a small company of men and women of various nationalities and complexions were gathered. In the desk was a man of impressive countenance, whose voice seemed to me remarkably forcible, though low and musical. . . . The preacher, as I learned later, was Dr. Horatius Bonar. Learned and eloquent, there was a wonderful charm in what he said that night, because he had strong convictions on that subject of much speculation, the second coming of the Lord."[57]

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[55]Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 330.

[56]For an account of the journey by a companion of Bonar, see Memories, pp. 33-43.

[57]Charles Seymour Robinson, Annotations upon Popular Hymns, p. 223.

Thus the years of his ministry at Kelso passed away, twenty-eight of them in all, even in their temper and consistent in their fidelity to the evangelical fervor of their beginning. For about twenty years after the Disruption, the Kelso church had been involved in a prolonged litigation over the ownership of the property. Finally, in accordance with the title-deeds, the courts judged it to be the property of the Established Church, and it was appropriated by them. Bonar's congregation met this defeat with brave purpose, and steps were taken to build a new church of imposing architectural design. While the church was still unfinished, however, Bonar decided to accept a call from the newly formed Chalmers' Memorial Church in the Grange district of Edinburgh. Bonar had frequently refused various invitations to other churches. When he had been called to a church in Newcastle, he answered: "Here I am, and here I must remain till my Lord come to me or for me."[58] But when the call came in 1866 from the Grange church, he decided to move. His reasons for leaving Kelso are not known, but the desire to return to Edinburgh and the scenes and friends of his youth must have partly influenced his decision.

About the year 1861 some members of the Roxburgh Free Church living south of the Meadows had begun to consider the possibility of forming a congregation in the Grange district of Edinburgh.[59] In 1862 they rented Clare Hall Academy and began holding regular services. Under the leadership of Professor

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[58] Memories, p. 102.

[59] For the history of the church, see Grange United Free Church (Chalmers Memorial) Diamond Jubilee, 1866-1926 (hereafter referred to as Grange Church Jubilee. The church is now known as St. Catherine's in the Grange.

George Smeaton of New College the small company of worshippers made steady progress until, in 1865, the congregation received the sanction of the Presbytery, and Dr. Smeaton was appointed Moderator of Session. The building of a new church became urgent. The intention was to place the new church "as nearly as possible equidistant from Dr. Begg's Church (Newington) and the Barclay Church,"[60] these at that time being the nearest Free Churches in Edinburgh. Through the generosity of Mr. John Macfie of Hope Terrace, who offered to add fifty per cent to all subscriptions given to the new church building before a certain date, the necessary funds to begin construction were obtained, and the Presbytery granted permission to proceed. From architectural plans prepared by Mr. Patrick Wilson the building was begun, the foundation stone being laid by Lord Kintore on the 13th of October 1865. "Grange Free Church" was the name originally proposed for it; and by that name it was generally known, but the official title adopted was "Chalmers' Memorial."

On June 7, 1866, Bonar was inducted as minister of the new congregation, and preached his first sermon in Clare Hall on the 10th of June. The address presented to him at his ministerial jubilee recalled the circumstances: "When you were called to labour here, there was no church built, and the company that gathered week by week in Clare Hall, the usual place of meeting, was not large. But no minister could be settled in a new charge without arrangements being made, which might over-

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[60] Grange Church Jubilee, p. 2.

strain a small and uncertain congregation. You solved the difficulty by saying from the outset, Let these be what they may, I will come among you to preach the Gospel. A ministry, begun under these auspices, could not fail to succeed."[61] And from the first, his pulpit and pastoral work were amazingly successful. The church building was completed and opened for worship on December 6, 1866, and was soon cleared of debt. Several years later it had to be enlarged to accommodate the crowds that flocked to hear Bonar preach. The work of organization was soon completed and among the office-bearers were such distinguished names as Dr. John Duncan and Dr. George Smeaton of New College, J. B. Bishop, R. M. Ballantyne, and Patrick Guthrie. A mission district was chosen in Causewayside, and the first missionary appointed was Mr. Alexander Murray, who had been employed as evangelist by Dr. Bonar at Kelso. He is said to have been "a most lovable man, with a winsome gift of pleading in his preaching."[62] Soon the small hall was crowded at every meeting. In October of 1866 the first Communion Roll of the congregation contained sixty-one names. On the 24th of February 1867, when the first Communion was held in the new church building, there were one hundred and seventy communicants. The roll gradually grew as the population increased in the Grange and Warrender Park districts until in 1888 it reached over eight hundred. Bonar's congregation thus grew during his ministry from a mere handful to one of the largest and most influential in the city.

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[61] Jubilee, p. 8f. [62] Grange Church Jubilee, p. 5.

Progress in the congregation continued through the years with the exception of one episode which led to the loss of several office-bearers and members. Strange as it may seem, hymns had never been used in the worship services of the church, although after 1874 they had been sung in the children's services. Bonar had all along desired to have hymns in the church, but in deference to the wishes of some of the members of the Kirk Session had not pressed the matter. It finally became apparent, however, that the great majority of the congregation were in favor of singing hymns. The Session took up the question, and after much discussion, gave their sanction, and the Free Church Hymn Book, with many of Bonar's hymns in it, was introduced in December 1883. Several office-bearers resigned in consequence, among them Dr. Nixon and Professor Smeaton, who had been instrumental in founding the church. It is said that when the first hymn was announced they rose and strode indignantly down the aisle of the church.[63]

One marked feature of Dr. Bonar's ministry was his work among the young. That he had an extraordinary gift of dealing with them is shown by the popularity of his children's services. Both in Kelso and in Edinburgh crowded congregations of children attended his services for them. "It was a wonderful sight," notes one writer, "to see the Church crammed up to the top of the pulpit stairs, with children listening intently and reverently."[64] It was his habit to move up and down the aisles

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[63]See Theodore Ledyard Cuyler, Recollections of a Long Life, An Autobiography, p. 41.

[64]Grange Church Jubilee, p. 3f.

of the church as they were assembling, greeting and seating them comfortably. When he read the Scripture lesson, he often paused and asked his youthful audience for the next word. The sermon was always enlivened by questions and answers. Among those who achieved fame in various walks of life and who recalled pleasant memories of these children's services in the Grange were: Robert M. Ballantyne, the writer of boys' adventure stories; Thomas M. Lindsay, who was to become the Principal of the United Free Church College in Glasgow; Alexander Mackay, famous in missionary history as "Mackay of Uganda;" and John Watson, who as "Ian McClaren" became the well-known author of Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush.

Dr. Bonar continued to preach in the open air, being one of the few regular ministers in Edinburgh who did this type of preaching. Often he could be seen in the evenings at the Meadows or in Parliament Square addressing his audiences. Up until within a short period of his last illness, he was accustomed to preach not only on week-day evenings, but often on Sunday evenings, after having twice officiated in his own pulpit.

Besides his numerous poetical anticipations of the Second Advent, Bonar gave much time and energy to prophetical studies. He not only served for twenty-five years as editor of and one of the chief contributors to the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy and wrote several books defending his views, but also was a constant speaker at various religious conferences dealing

with the subject. At Barnet, at Perth, and especially at Mildmay, he gathered with members of several denominations, particularly the evangelical section of the Church of England, who sympathized with his views. From 1871 to 1881 he gave regular attendance at Mildmay and took a prominent part in the meetings. "He was welcomed," writes the superintendent of the conferences, "and his influence valued as giving weight to the proceedings by his firm stand on the side of orthodox views, as well as by the spiritual tone which, along with others, he gave to the conference."[65]

During the religious revival of 1873-74 under the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey, Bonar constantly worked for and supported the movement. He wrote many hymns for the team and his pen was busy again in Times of Blessing, a weekly magazine containing accounts of the revival movement. One writer says of him during this time: "Perhaps his happiest time was in the revival of 1874, when his whole nature seemed to mellow and broaden."[66] After the evangelists had left, he devoted himself to guiding the new converts in their church life and finding outlets for their service.

In the proceedings of the Church courts Bonar took little part. He rarely attended meetings of the Presbytery, and seemed content to leave the business of the Church in other hands. On several occasions, however, when principles were at stake which he held to be of vital importance, he spoke and

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[65]Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 330.

[66]Memories, p. 103.

wrote boldly and sometimes caustically. In the "Union Controversy" he joined with Dr. James Begg and others to fight a proposed merger of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church. And in 1881 he gave his aid to the "Constitutional" party in their vain attempt to demolish the views which were put forth by Professor Robertson Smith. The general esteem in which he was held by the Church was shown in 1883 when he was raised to the Moderator's Chair in the General Assembly, the highest honor the Free Church had to bestow upon him.

In 1886 the first steps were taken to secure a colleague for Dr. Bonar, who had begun to feel the burden of his seventy-eight years, and had not been able to preach regularly for the preceding two years. The following year a call was given to the Rev. John M. Sloan of Glasgow, and on the 11th of September Bonar made his last appearance in the pulpit. In his retirement he continued to issue monthly messages to his people which are preserved in the Congregational Record of the church.[67] They breathe all the tenderness of affection he felt for his congregation, and are filled with the old evangelic fervor of warning and pleading.

On the 5th of April 1888, Dr. Bonar's ministerial jubilee was celebrated with a public meeting in the Grange Church.[68] A large and distinguished company assembled to do him honor. Testimony was given of his power as a preacher,

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[67] See Congregational Record of the Grange Free Church. This record is still in possession of the church (St. Catherine's).

[68] For an account of the proceedings, see Jubilee.

author, and writer of hymns. Addresses were presented to him by the congregations of the Grange and Kelso churches, and the Free Presbyteries of Kelso and Edinburgh. Sir William Muir, Principal of Edinburgh University, presented him with a silver salver and a thousand pounds. The salver bore the following inscription:

> Presented on the occasion of his Ministerial Jubilee, 30th November, 1887, along with One Thousand Pounds, to the Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D., Chalmers Memorial Free Church, Edinburgh, by his Congregation and Friends throughout the world, in grateful recognition of his eminent services to the Church of Christ, by his hymns, his writings, and his faithful ministry. Edinburgh, 5th April, 1888.[69]

In spite of his failing strength, Dr. Bonar made a touching reply, closing with this appeal: "And let me say this, that should you at any time feel particularly called upon to remember the poor and needy, the weary and heavy laden, you will think of your old minister and lay my name before the throne."[70]

As age advanced, his sufferings became extreme and he was almost continuously in pain. Until the very last, however, he conducted family worship and poured out his thoughts in long prayers for his family and congregation. Finally, too weak to think or speak clearly, he repeated portions of Scripture and favorite texts. One such text had great meaning for him, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away." It hung on the wall opposite him as he lay in his bed and was constantly

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[69] Ibid., p. 15.

[70] Ibid., p. 16.

on his lips during his last days. It is now graven on his tombstone in the Canongate Churchyard in the heart of the busy city he loved so well.

Bonar died on the 31st of July 1889, and was buried in the family plot in the Canongate on the 5th of August. Dr. Theodore Cuyler's account of his funeral service is especially interesting:

> On the day of his obsequies there was a tremendous downpour. . . . But in spite of the storm the Morningside Church, by the entrance to the Grange Cemetery, was well filled by a representative assembly. The service was confined to the reading of the Scriptures, to two prayers and the singing of Bonar's beautiful hymn, the last verse of which is
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> 'Broken Death's dread hands that bound us,
> Life and victory around us;
> Christ the King Himself hath crown'd us,
> Ah, 'tis Heaven at last.'
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> . . . I rode down to the Canongate Cemetery with grand old Principal John Cairns. . . and Bonar's colleague, the Rev. Mr. Sloane. . . . The storm-swept streets that day were lined with silent mourners; and under weeping skies, we laid down to his rest the mortal remains of the man who attuned more voices to the melodies of praise than any Scotchman of the century.[71]

Almost nothing is known of Bonar's private life. Markedly reserved and silent, particularly reticent as to his own feelings and experiences, the most frequent impression he left on others was that of a strangely solemn and stern man. Dr. George Wilson said of him: "Excitement, frenzy, loudness,

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[71] Theodore Cuyler, op. cit., pp. 41-43.

mere noise, could not live in the presence of Dr. Horatius Bonar."[72] Underneath this somewhat stern and forbidding exterior, however, he seems to have had a genuinely sympathetic and warm nature. Lord Guthrie speaks of the "benignity of his welcome, the manifestly genuine interest of his personal inquiries, and the beauty of his smile - most beautiful of all smiles, the rare smile of a grave man."[73]

As a father Bonar showed an understanding love for his children. Although acknowledging the fact that his father struck some people as stern, his son states that the idea was strange to him: "So skilfully did he exercise his guidance as a father, that I never felt the rein that was driving me. I admired his strength and firmness, and as a schoolboy I felt him to be always absolutely fair. He laid himself out to be approachable, and he continually invited my confidence."[74] His daughter notes that while he held the "severer forms of truth and never hesitated to speak out what he believed, he was gentle to all he met, however weak and erring they might be. For ourselves, I can only say, that when God was called 'Our Father', we children found it easy to understand and trust His love: we knew what 'as a father pitieth his children' meant; for did we not see it every day?"[75] Five successive deaths of his children brought out the depths of his affection for them. "Often have we seen him," says his daughter, "like David, plead-

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[72] Memories, p. 120.

[73] Ibid., p. 84.

[74] Ibid., p. 54.

[75] Bonar, p. 202.

ing passionately for life while the child was yet alive, hardly when the child was dead, to gain David's calm, but rather to have his sorrows transmitted into the still more passionate looking for reunion."[76]

One side of Dr. Bonar's character which would hardly be suspected by readers of his hymns and books was his sense of humor. A charming example of his humorous side is illustrated in a poem which he wrote about his brother Andrew describing an incident which happened at Anwoth where they were spending a holiday shortly after his brother had held the office of Moderator in the Free Church. Here is his description of his brother:

A second Rutherford he seemed,
But statelier in his mien,
For in the great Assembly he
Had Moderator been.

Then follows the story of his adventure in attempting to rescue a duck which was half-drowned in a muddy pond:

A duck of noble ancestry,
A Covenanting bird
Whose Anwoth sires had oft been fed
By the great Rutherford.

At first the Moderator shrank from the rescue:

His valour in a moment cooled
At touch of that dark ooze;
He would have risked his life to save,
But could not risk his shoes.

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[76] Ibid., p. 199.

'Make haste, poor drowning duck,' he cried,
As to and fro he ran,
Shouting with awful voice as none
But Moderators can.

At last the duck was brought to safety by means of an old basket, its rescuer remaining dry-shod:

The grateful duck went curtseying home,
And, though in woeful plight,
It turned again and yet again
To gaze upon the knight.

Ne'er had the great man got before
So shrill a vote of thanks,
As on that memorable day
On Disdhu's verdant banks.

And many a duck shall tell the tale
To ducklings gathered round,
How the great mother-duck was saved
By Andrew the renowned.[77]

Spiritually Dr. Bonar was a truly humble and consecrated man. He shrank from publicity and deprecated recognition and honors. "In very many practical ways," states his daughter, "he refused to let this world gain power over him, or to seek such things as success, or fame, or money. He took these things when they came to him, and made use of them, or freely gave away - that was all. When remonstrated with for not retaining the copyright of his numerous works he replied: 'I will not entangle myself; a minister should be free from worldly care.'"[78] He was pre-eminently a man of prayer, spending hours each day in earnest prayer and meditation. His daughter

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[77] Hymns, p. xxxvif. For examples of his humor as Moderator of the General Assembly, see Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, held at Edinburgh, May 1883.

[78] Bonar, p. 199f.

speaks of hearing "a slow step pacing the study floor from end to end, and a cry, broken and indistinct, but rising at times to audible words, and some one petition, repeated at intervals over and over again, and this literally for hours. And it was thus that pausing awestruck beside that locked door, some of us gained our first conception of what the deep, true communion of a soul with its God might be."[79] The most striking quality of his spiritual life, however, was his continual attitude of one who waited for the return of his Lord. Dr. Bonar literally lived from day to day with his loins girt and his lamp burning, ready, if his Master should come, to greet Him.

The key to a full understanding of Horatius Bonar, however, is to be found in his verse, so much was his poetry a part of himself. For he found expression of his feelings and experiences in his pen. "Lie there, my pen!" he wrote in the last years of his life:

> Thou art the lute with which I sang my sadness,
> When sadness like a cloud begirt my way;
> Thou art the harp whose strings gave out my gladness,
> When burst the sunshine of a happier day,
> Resting upon my soul with sweet and silent ray.[80]

Much could be written concerning Bonar's poetry as an expression of himself. His daughter wrote of him: "Thoughts, emotions, sorrows, hopes, joys too deep for common utterance, yet too strong and soul-shaking to be safely repressed, sought an out-

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[79] Ibid., p. 200.

[80] Old Letters, p. ii.

let. They found it in the pulpit he loved. They found it at the family altar, when, forgetting himself and his listeners, he poured himself out in prayer. They found it, most of all, in his poetry."[81] Many of his poems faithfully reflect his innermost thoughts and deepest feelings expressed on occasions of great joy or brooding sorrow. They were intimately linked to the daily experiences of his life, and almost every event is mirrored in some sweet song. As such they constitute an extraordinarily interesting human document, palpitating with real life. But there is more in them than that, for they unfold the drama of the very soul of the man: his hopes and fears, his aspirations and affections, his failures and victories; the gamut of his experiences is recorded in song, and scarcely a note is missing. It must here suffice to look at some of them which found expression from the more intensely personal relationships of his life. With thankful remembrance he looked back over his past life:

> I look along the past, and gather themes,
> For praise to Thee, my ever-gracious God.
> It is a past of mercy, and it teems
> With goodness at each step along the road.[82]

In beautiful flowing lines he recalls days of great happiness:

> I was in love with hill and vale,
> The noon's warm flush, the starlight pale,
> The murmur of the midnight gale,
> The mirth of wayward streams.

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[81] Bonar, p. 197.

[82] Faith and Hope, I, 131.

I wooed the silence of the night,
The blushes of the bursting light,
The sea's green depths, the heaven's blue height,
And days went by in dreams.[83]

With characteristic pensiveness he wrote on the birth of his son:

This day of war and weariness,
Will soon with me be done;
But thine, my child of love and joy,
Is only now begun.

Time's years of fever and unrest
Are nearly run for me;
But Life, with all its ill and good,
Is still in store for thee.[84]

And in memory of some friend he says:

The earth is lonelier now, when he
Who walked with me its ways is gone;
But soon the loneliness is o'er,
The blank forgotten and unknown;
Not long, not long alone![85]

The majority of these personal poems are "songs of sorrow" poured out from his inmost soul in the midst of deep emotions. The hymn which he wrote on the death of his mother in 1854 is a chapter from real life which strikes a deep, tender note of grief:

Past all pain for ever,
Done with sickness now;
Let me close thine eyes, mother,
Let me smooth thy brow.
Rest and health and gladness;
These thy portion now;
Let me press thy hand, mother,
Let me kiss thy brow.[86]

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[83] Hymns, p. 164.

[84] Faith and Hope, II, 235.

[85] Hymns, p. 186.

[86] Faith and Hope, I, 99.

His sorrow on the death of his children was pathetic in its intensity:

> The flowers of Spring have come and gone:
> Bright were the blossoms, brief their stay;
> They shone, and they were shone upon,
> They flourished, faded, passed away.
> So, hidden from our sorrowing eyes,
> Our young, sweet, spring-bloom buried lies
> One blast of earth swept o'er the flower;
> It died, the blossom of an hour.[87]

Again in the following lines, written after the death of his daughter Lucy, is a touch of engaging intimacy and sincerity in his sorrow:

> All night we watched the ebbing life,
> As if its flight to stay;
> Till, as the dawn was coming up,
> Our last hope pass'd away.
>
> She was the music of our home,
> A day that knew no night,
> The fragrance of our garden-bower,
> A thing all smiles and light.[88]

Even in the midst of death, however, he always shows a simple, childlike trust of God, as evidenced in the lines written on the death of his son Henry Robert:

> He died to live; for Jesus died:
> He lives, to die no more.
> Why weep for one whose tears are dried,
> For whom all death is o'er?
>
> You miss the little footsteps here,
> You miss the golden smile;
> You miss the sunny locks so fair,
> You miss the playful wile.

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[87] Ibid., I, 221.

[88] Ibid., II, 229.

Yet all is well: you part to meet
And clasp your gem once more,
When all shall deathless be, and sweet,
On the eternal shore.[89]

His daughter is right, when she says of him: "In his poetry, his whole nature seems to lay itself bare, with its emotions, its conflicts, its beliefs, its hopes and longings, its tranquil musings and its tears - all is here. It is himself. The poet is the man."[90]

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[89] Ibid., p. 166f.

[90] Bonar, p. 200f.

CHAPTER II

HYMN-WRITER

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Introduction

The traditional medium of praise in the worship of the Scottish Church after the Reformation has been the metrical Psalms. From time-honored familiarity the words and their melodies, many of which were indigenous, have exercised great influence upon the mind and heart of the Scottish people, and have been one of the characteristic features of their public worship. This strict adherence in every detail of worship to the Bible and the divinely appointed praise of the Psalms lasted until the eighteenth century. Indeed, no other form of vocal worship was used in the churches until a new development of Scripture songs took place, after much conflict and discussion, in the form of the Paraphrases of 1741-1781. Although a considerable number of hymns had grown up side by side with the psalms and paraphrases, the singing of hymns in public worship did not become general until after 1852 in the United Presbyterian Church, after 1870 in the Established Church, and not until after 1873 in the Free Church.[1]

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[1]For an account of the history and growth of Scottish psalms,

While the psalms and paraphrases composed the hymnary of the Church of Scotland during these years, there has been a long list of sacred poets and many collections of hymns and sacred songs. Sir William Alexander, who was born near Stirling in 1580, wrote three volumes of hymns, in addition to having the principal share in a version of the Psalms which was published in 1631 as the work of King James, and was sought to be imposed upon the Scottish Church. Sir William Mure of Rowallan published a version of the Psalms and wrote several devotional sonnets. William Drummond of Hawthornden, one of the most literary Scotsmen of his time, made several contributions to the sacred poetry of Scotland, the most notable being his 'Hymn on the Dedication of a Church.' David Dickson, the reputed author of 'Jerusalem, my happy home,' was a professor of divinity in Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, who, at the time of the Restoration, was deprived of his office for refusing to take the oath of supremacy. Robert Campbell wrote the lovely Communion hymn, 'At the Lamb's high feast we sing'; Gilbert Rorison was the writer of the stately hymn, 'Three in One and One in Three'; the saintly Robert Murray McCheyne of Dundee wrote 'When this passing world is done'; Norman Macleod is the writer of the well-known hymn 'Courage, brother, do not stumble'; and Dr.

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paraphrases, and hymns, see J.C. Carrick, Psalms, Paraphrases, and Hymns in the Church of Scotland; W.M. Page, Our Psalms and Hymns; John Julian, ed., A Dictionary of Hymnology (hereafter referred to as Julian), pp. 1020-1033; Millar Patrick, The Story of the Church's Song, pp. 103-108.

George Matheson of Edinburgh was the writer of the magnificent hymn 'O Love that wilt not let me go.' Still other representative Scottish hymn-writers are Ralph Erskine, John Logan, William Cameron, Michael Bruce, James Thomson, Ralph Wardlaw, Mary Lundie Duncan, James Drummond Burns, Andrew Young, and a host of others who have poured themselves out in sacred verse.

Two of the best known Scottish hymn-writers are James Montgomery and Henry Francis Lyte. Montgomery wrote over four hundred hymns, many of which stand in the first rank of sacred poetry. Two of his best known are 'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire' and 'Angels from the realms of glory.' The most widely used of Henry Francis Lyte's many hymns is 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.' No Scottish hymn-writer, however, has won so high a place in sacred song as has "the prince of Scottish hymn-writers"[2] - Horatius Bonar.

A. Bonar and his Poetry

Horatius Bonar seems to have begun his "great life-harvest here on earth"[3] at an early age. It is not possible to tell when he first began to express himself in rhyme, but even as a student he showed some facility in writing verse.[4]

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[2]Statement by James Moffat, ed., Handbook to the Church Hymnary, p. 273.

[3]Old Letters, p. ii.

[4]Evidently his daughter did not know of his early poems in her article Bonar, p. 198. His son states that he was not aware of their existence until 1904 when they were found in an old bundle of magazines, see Hymns, p. ix.

According to his son, the first of his poems appeared in 1827 when Bonar was not quite nineteen years of age. One of the first pieces he ever published, and of special interest for that reason, is entitled 'The Lonely Hearth,' and runs thus:

> He stood bewildered on his lonely hearth;
> Sadness was written on his fixed brow;
> For he had witnessed happy days of mirth,
> Where silence dwells and desolation now.
> The grief he felt he recked not to avow;
> Proudly he stood, yet sorrowfully too;
> The latest leaf upon the topmost bough
> Of a tall oak, aloft that lately threw
> Its hundred leafy arms, when Summer days were new.
>
> Friendless and homeless, how unlike the past!
> Once-honoured scion of a noble stem!
> But now forsaken, desolate, - the last
> Bright jewel of a kingly diadem:
> The last dim dewdrop of all those that gem
> The still, grey dawning, ere the sunbeams fall.
> He trod his once-glad halls, but found in them
> Naught but his shivered household-gods; for all
> Was tomb-like, hushed, and dark as with a funeral pall.[5]

In addition to his university and divinity studies, Bonar brought to his poetry an intimate acquaintance with the great writers of all ages. His daughter, speaking of his preparation, writes: "He was nourished on antiquity and the classics, and loved patristic and medieval poetry. Old phrases, aphorisms, 'jewels five words long,' were ever ringing in his ears. Some sentence of Augustine would set him musing, some verse of Chyrostom appeal to him for translation or imitation, or suggest a felicitous heading."[6] He was at home among the classics and

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[5] Ibid., p. vi.

[6] Bonar, p. 201.

frequently quoted and alluded to them in his writings.[7] He loved Homer more than any other secular writer; Euripides, Sophocles, Virgil, and Cicero were great favorities and he read them frequently. Among English writers Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton were highly valued and received much study. Shakespeare's plays were thoroughly studied and the most remarkable passages, beautiful phrases, and striking words, were written down in a notebook for future use. He loved the narrative poems of Sir Walter Scott, and other favorites of his were Campbell, Cowper, and Coleridge. It was his habit to carry a pocket edition of Ossian or some other book about with him in vacation time, and as he walked in the hills or by the seashore, would read some familiar passages aloud to his children. "The fact which strikes me," writes his son, "is the thorough way in which they were all studied, not only for personal profit or for pleasure, but with a view to being of use at some future time."[8]

Strange as it may appear, while Bonar was "delicately sensitive to the music of words" and showed a great mastery of metrical technique, he was not musical in the ordinary sense at all. His daughter notes that "he could only distinguish very familiar airs, and those of marked measure. Instrumental music was a sealed book to him."[9]

Dr. Bonar was a thorough student of hymnology. He made many translations and imitations from Greek and Latin poems,

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[7] For an example of such use, see Old Letters, p. 10.

[8] Hymns, p. xxviii.

[9] Bonar, p. 201.

and was an authority in his day on the early hymnology of the church.[10] In 1852 he edited The New Jerusalem,[11] a treatise marked by learning and research. From time to time he aided in the compilation of several hymnals, including the English Presbyterian Hymnal.[12] He edited several collections of psalms and hymns, and frequently published articles on hymnology in the periodicals of the time, and for the benefit of his own congregation.[13]

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[10] See Horatius Bonar, "Hymns of the Early Church," The Sunday at Home, A Family Magazine for Sabbath Reading, pp. 8-12, 90-93, 202-204, 229-232, 315-317, 357-359. He concludes this work on early hymnology by saying: "The Church of God will not lose much by setting aside the largest portions of the old hymns. For the embodiment of Scripture truths, for noble sentiments, for spiritual thoughts, and for the expression of religious feeling, the hymnology of the nineteenth century need not shrink from comparison with the religious lyrics, whether Greek or Latin, of an over-lauded antiquity.", p. 359. This series of articles appeared in 1878.

[11] Horatius Bonar, ed., The New Jerusalem, A Hymn of the Olden Time. For a review of this book, see The Wesleyan Times, April 14, 1862.

[12] See Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship.

[13] See Horatius Bonar, "The Hymnology of the Scotch Reformation," The Christian Church, December 1881. This article was reproduced, with some alterations, on the cover in which the Free Church Monthly, October 26, 1883, was supplied to his congregation. It was introduced by Dr. Bonar with this dogmatic statement: "I think it right to publish my views on Hymnology, for the benefit of the congregation. They are views which I have always held, ever since I began to read Scottish Church History. The opposite views are not consistent with our Reformation History, but are departures from the sentiments of Knox, Melville, Craig, and Henderson - innovations, in short, upon Reformation principles." This article aroused great controversy in clerical circles, and Bonar was violently attacked for his views in an answer by D. Hay Fleming. See D. Hay Fleming, The Hymnology of the Scottish Reformation, A Reply to Dr. Horatius Bonar and Dr. G.W. Sprott.

No particular method was employed by Bonar in writing his hymns; they were tossed off in a rather casual manner, as the spontaneous and inevitable expression of one who lived close to God. In addition to the numerous hymns which expressed his own devotional thoughts, he seemed only too glad to answer the many calls made upon him for special hymns, his main concern being that they should be of help to others. His daughter says of these efforts urged on him from without: ". . . he was almost too ready to answer all appeals. A hymn to comfort a mourner, to please a child, to suit a particular case, to be sung to a given tune or on some special occasion, was constantly wanted."[14] His pen was almost constantly at work, filling the notebook which was always in his pocket. In spare moments he would jot down some idea which occurred to him as likely to be of use in the future, sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse. Among the unfinished pieces found in his notebooks were many scattered outlines of hymns and poems, prayers which were the expression of his own personal spiritual longings, and couplets or fragmentary verses filling some vacant corner of a page. Some of these fragments were later used as ideas for new pieces, but many of them were afterwards destroyed. His son has preserved two of these which are expressive of Bonar's own spiritual life, and are "full of force if not finished poetic beauty."[15] The first is a pleading prayer for help and succour:

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[14] Bonar, p. 200.

[15] Hymns, p. xix.

By Thy cross, incarnate God,
Hear me when with Thee I plead;
By the merits of Thy blood
Succour me in this my need!
By Thy Name, all names above,
Oh, regard my bitter cry;
By Thy finished work of love,
Jesus, hear me, or I die![16]

The second fragment is a confession of sin:

There never came an emptier soul to Thee,
Never, never!
All want and weariness and sin,
Evil without me and within,
To Thee, O Lord; I flee, I flee!
Wilt Thou say nay to me?[17]

Reproductions of the original manuscripts from Dr. Bonar's notebooks are unique among hymnal manuscripts,[18] and give some insight into the method the writer adopted when composing his hymns. It is evident from the manuscripts that he used a kind of shorthand, and while thinking out the lines of his hymn, made all kinds of quaint little sketches and profiles of faces on the margin of the paper.

Small concern was given by Bonar to minor imperfections in the structure of his verse. He rarely took the time to edit or revise his original manuscript, even with his best hymns. Speaking of this aspect of his father's methods, his son writes: ". . . they are full of contractions, with an occasional word or phrase in shorthand; sometimes a line is struck out and another substituted, yet in nearly every case the complete hymn,

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[16] Ibid., p. xix.

[17] Ibid., p. xix.

[18] See Ibid., pp. 46, 50, 139, 207, 233, for reproductions of Bonar's original manuscripts; also Appendix.

almost as it was afterwards published, can be gleaned from this rough draft."[19]

Much of his poetry was written when he was away from his ordinary work, travelling by the train to some speaking engagement, walking in the countryside or by the seaside. Generally no account was noted of the circumstances or experiences which prompted the hymns, and only rarely was a record even made of their dates. His son states in this connection: "There is no publication which contains any account of the history or circumstances connected with the origin of any of my father's hymns. Indeed, my father has kept no record himself of even their dates. Some of his best known he wrote in railway trains; others, when sitting by the fireside at night."[20] Bonar himself is reported to have replied, when asked about the dates of his hymns by his colleague, the Rev. J. M. Sloan, "I have got no record as to when they were written, or the circumstances."[21] Strangely enough, even his best known hymns had very obscure origins. Speaking of one of his tender hymns, 'I heard the voice of Jesus say,' Bonar writes, "I have nothing on record but a little scrap of paper without a date and the hymn written in pencil."[22]

As the years passed he gradually developed the habit of thinking in verse form and it became a natural thing for him to translate, imitate, or versify almost any subject or

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[19] Hymns, p. xiv.

[20] R.W. Welsh and R.G. Edwards, Romance of Psalter and Hymnal, Authors and Composers, p. 219.

[21] Jubilee, p. 33f.

[22] Duncan Morrison, op. cit., p. 222.

thought that struck him. Indeed, in his latter years, many of his poems were not written with the public in view at all, but for his own self-expression, or for the enjoyment or comfort of his family or social circle.

His hymns had their beginning in a very simple manner.[23] While he was assistant to the Rev. James Lewis of St. John's Church in Leith, he was in charge of a Sunday School in the church's mission district. When he began his work among the boys and girls, he found himself hindered by their lack of interest in the worship services. He felt that this attitude was largely owing to the fact that there were almost no suitable children's hymns for them to sing. The psalms and a few hymns, not suited in words or tunes to young people's needs, were all they were accustomed to use in their services. In order to stir their interest, he selected some of the tunes the children liked to sing, and set himself to write more suitable words for them. It was in this manner that his first two hymns, 'I lay my sins on Jesus,' and 'The morning, the bright and the beautiful morning,' came to be written. The tunes used were 'Heber' and 'The Flowers of the Forest.' These first hymns were printed on leaflets and distributed for the children's use; they were delighted with the verses written especially for them. Later on he collected other hymns which seemed to be suitable for them, and these were printed in leaflet form, along with three new hymns of his own composition: 'There was gladness in

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[23] For an interesting, though incomplete, account of the history and chronology of Bonar's hymns, see Hymns, pp. x-xxvii; also Julian, pp. 161f, 1554.

Zion,' 'For thee we long and pray, O blessed Sabbeth-morn,' and the better known 'I was a wand'ring sheep.'

Probably the first hymn Bonar wrote which was not primarily intended for the young was the now familiar hymn, 'Go labour on; spend and be spent,' which was written in 1836 to encourage his fellow workers in his mission district at Leith. It was composed to the tune of 'Old Hundredth.'

When he left Leith in 1837, he wrote the hymn, ''Tis thus we press the hand and part,' to be sung at the farewell meeting. These verses were later improved and revised when published in his first volume of Hymns of Faith and Hope.

After Bonar went to Kelso in 1837 as minister of the North Parish Church, his interest continued in providing hymns for children. In a few years he brought out a small unbound book of selected hymns by various writers, including several from his own pen.[24] One of the best known of these was the hymn, 'Happy Sons of Israel.'

Shortly after the Disruption he collected and published twenty-six hymns in two series of tracts under the title Songs for the Wilderness.[25] This contained the melancholy New Year's hymn, 'A few more years shall roll,' which was written for the members of his congregation on New Year's Day 1843.

In 1845 he edited a collection of over three hundred

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[24] Horatius Bonar, ed., Hymns for Schools.

[25] Horatius Bonar, Songs for the Wilderness, Series I and II. Most of the hymns already mentioned were first published in these books; unfortunately neither of the series is obtainable at the present time. For a partial listing, see Julian, p. 161.

hymns by various writers under the title The Bible Hymn-book.[26] Although the authorship of none of the hymns was indicated, and Bonar's name did not appear on the title page or in the preface, at least fourteen of his own hymns were included in this little volume. Among those hymns appearing in this collection the following by Bonar have become well known: 'In the beginning was the Word'; 'All that I was, my sin, my guilt'; 'This is not my place of resting'; 'There is a Morning Star, my soul'; 'That clime is not like this dull clime of ours'; and 'The Church has waited long.'

The next year Bonar edited another book of hymns entitled Hymns: Original and Selected,[27] which contained hymns of various writers and several of his own including the well-loved hymn, 'I heard the voice of Jesus say.'

In 1848 Bonar undertook the editorship of the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy,[28] and during its twenty-five years of existence published a piece from his pen in every single issue. Typical of the hymns which appeared in this magazine are the following: 'Where the faded flower shall freshen'; 'The last long note has sounded'; 'Till He come, we own His name'; 'It will be order then'; and ''Tis the Beloved from glory calls.'

From 1857 to 1879 he also edited the Christian Treasury,[29] and many of his hymns were first published in it.

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[26] Horatius Bonar, The Bible Hymn-Book.

[27] Horatius Bonar, ed., Hymns: Original and Selected.

[28] Horatius Bonar, ed., The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy.

[29] Horatius Bonar, ed., The Christian Treasury.

The first authorized collection of Bonar's poems did not appear until 1857, more than twenty years after the writing of his first hymns. This book was the first of three volumes of poems bearing the title Hymns of Faith and Hope, and it contained one hundred and fifteen hymns by Bonar. In addition to most of those already mentioned, it included the following which have since become widely known: 'Beyond the smiling and the weeping'; 'Calm me, my God, and keep me calm'; 'Up and away, like the dew of the morning'; 'No shadows yonder'; 'Thy way, not mine, O Lord'; 'Come, Lord, and tarry not'; and the lovely Communion hymn 'Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face.' This latter hymn was written in 1855 in response to the request of Dr. John James Bonar of Greenock for a hymn to be read aloud at the close of a Communion service in which Horatius Bonar was assisting his brother.

Shortly after this time, in December 1855, Bonar and some companions visited Egypt and travelled by camel through the desert of Sinai to Palestine. His visit to these countries made a lasting impression on him, effecting to some extent his preaching and writing the rest of his life. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his verse, and many of the poems written during this period were suggested by this Eastern visit.

In 1861 the second volume of Hymns of Faith and Hope was published by Bonar. It contained one hundred and twenty-three poems, including a number of translations and imitations, and poems on Eastern and Biblical scenes. Although most of

the hymns are now little known, the following have become familiar: 'Make use of me, my God'; 'Not what these hands have done'; 'O love of God, how strong and true'; 'O love that casts out fear'; 'He liveth long who liveth well'; 'Not what I am, O Lord, but what thou art'; and 'Thou must be true thyself.'

It was during this period that Bonar assisted in the compilation of the English Presbyterian Hymnal. This volume contains no less that fifty-one hymns by Bonar, and his son states that three of his best known hymns were written especially for this collection. The three hymns were: 'No, not despairingly'; 'Glory be to God the Father'; and 'When the weary, seeking rest.' This latter hymn was based on Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple in II Chronicles, 6: 29-30; and came to Bonar's mind when he was asked to provide a refrain for "the two lovely lines of Mendelssohn's, with which Callcott's tune 'Intercession' ends."[30] The Rev. R. H. Lundie says that this intercessary poem was Bonar's own preference among his hymns. Once when a friend told him that this hymn was his favorite among all of Bonar's hymns, Bonar is said to have replied, "I think that it is my own favourite too; it has less poetry in it than some of them, but I like it."[31]

The third volume of Hymns of Faith and hope was published in 1866. It contained one hundred and one hymns, and translations of forty-seven of the Psalms. Among those hymns which are still in current use are the following: 'Blessing and

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[30] Hymns, p. xxii. [31] Memorial, p. 20; see also Hymns, p. xxiif.

honour and glory and power'; 'By the cross of Jesus standing'; 'Father, our children keep'; and 'Through good report and evil.'

The popularity of these three volumes can be seen from the statement of James Tait, writing in 1889, that they had circulated to the extent of 140,729 copies[32]-- an immense circulation for that time. And Canon Duncan states that the three books "were at one time found in almost every Christian home."[33]

Bonar brought out a little volume of poems in 1872 entitled The Song of the New Creation.[34] Most of the pieces were of a meditative or devotional character, and only a few have appeared as hymns. The following are the best known: 'For the bread and the wine'; 'Light of life, so softly shining'; 'Acquaint thyself with God'; and 'Praise ye the Lord, all things that be.'

Beginning in 1873 Bonar wrote many hymns in connection with the efforts of David Sankey, the American evangelist, and others, to "sing the gospel." These hymns were included in the various hymn-books used at the evangelistic meetings of the time. Several of these were widely adopted and among the more widely used are: 'Yet there is room'; 'Rejoice and be glad'; and 'Watch, brethren, watch.' One writer, speaking of Bonar's contribution in this field of sacred song, says: "Dr. Bonar is probably the only example of a really great hymnist in

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[32]James Tait, Two Centuries of Border Church Life, p. 340.

[33]Canon Duncan, Popular Hymns, Their Authors and Teaching, p. 183.

[34]Horatius Bonar, The Song of the New Creation.

modern times who has consecrated his gifts to the production of verses specially adapted for times of religious revival!"[35]

Much of his time was absorbed during these years in writing a long blank-verse poem entitled My Old Letters. This bulky volume of three hundred and fifty-two pages was published in 1877 and "consists of meditations on many subjects, suggested to the writer by his re-reading the letters received in his earlier days from old friends."[36] Although there is much of poetic value in the book, it apparently did not receive the literary recognition which Bonar had hoped for it. Dr. Robertson Nicoll says in regard to Bonar's attitude to the work, "It was touching to hear him say, when some reference was made to it, 'I had hoped the literary journals would give it more notice.' With this he passed at once from the subject, and even from the thought."[37]

In 1879 Bonar published fifty-seven pieces in a small book entitled Hymns of the Nativity.[38] Many very lovely Christmas poems are to be found among the other poems including: 'Night of wonder, night of glory'; 'The Christ of God hath come'; 'From the far East we come'; and the very fine sailor's litany, 'Great Ruler of the land and sea.'

Two years later Bonar issued a collection of thirty Communion hymns,[39] several of which had already appeared in previous books. Most of these hymns had been written by Dr.

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[35] W. Garrett Horder, The Hymn Lover, p. 473.

[36] Hymns, p. xxiv. [37] Memories, p. 102.

[38] Horatius Bonar, Hymns of the Nativity. [39] Horatius Bonar, Communion Hymns.

Bonar to be read aloud at the close of the communion service in his own church. Among many lovely ones are the following: 'Food of the soul, eternal bread'; 'Not far from any one of us, O Lord'; and "that perfect exposition of the author's standpoint before God"[40] -- 'On merit not my own I stand.'

Shortly after Bonar's death his son collected over a hundred of his best hymns, poems, and fragments, which had not previously appeared in his father's books, and published them under the title Until the Day Break.[41] Among those hymns included were the following: 'I know not in what watch He comes'; 'I would see Jesus now'; 'In Me ye shall have peace'; 'How long shall the shadows linger'; and his last hymn'Long years of peace.'

Several writers have said that the lines of 'In me ye shall have peace,' with its references to sickness and sleeplessness, was the last hymn to come from Bonar's pen. His son, however, maintains that this hymn was composed in 1880, nine years before his father's death, to comfort an old friend in his last illness. Bonar's last hymn, according to his son, was 'Long years of peace,' which was written for New Year's day 1886.[42]

In 1904 his son published a collection of Bonar's hymns with selections from his previous works,[43] which included one of his finest hymns -- 'Beloved, let us love: love is of God.'

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[40] Hymns, p. xxvi. [41] Horatius Bonar, 'Until the Day Break,' and other Hymns and Poems Left Behind.

[42] Hymns, p. xxvii; the hymn will be found on p. 236.

[43] Hymns.

All in all Horatius Bonar seems to have published over six hundred hymns and sacred poems during his long ministry. Although a number of them are translations of psalms and imitations from Greek and Latin sources, it is an outpouring of sacred verse which has been surpassed by few poets.

B. His Hymns In Their Doctrinal Aspect

Ever since St. Paul defined the purpose of hymns in the early Christian Church as "teaching and admonishing one another," hymn-singing has not only been an essential feature of public worship in the Church, but also a great aid to devotion and the teaching of Christian doctrine. Throughout the centuries hymns have had a teaching office, an office of prayer, and an office of mutual edification and encouragement, as well as St. Augustine's simple definition of a hymn as "a song of praise to God." "Next to the Bible," writes Frederick John Gillman, "the common hymn book of Christendom has perhaps done more than any other factor to restore the soul, to rejoice the heart, to enlighten the eyes, and to sustain the faith and love of Christian men and women throughout the world."[44] Even so early a writer as Basil the Great, who lived about the middle of the fourth century, realized the incalculable importance of the hymn in fashioning Christian thought: "By song we

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[44] Frederick John Gillman, The Evolution of the English Hymn, p. 28f.

are at once recreated and improved; the precepts of instruction are more deeply engraven on our hearts; for lessons which we receive unwillingly have a transient continuance, but those which charm and captivate in the hearing are permanently impressed upon our souls."[45] Indeed, it is almost impossible to estimate the influence of sacred song upon religious thought and character through the years. "Once a mere rivulet," notes Gillman, "this stream of sacred song has gone on widening and widening, until now it irrigates the vast territories over which the Christian gospel holds away, and it is a moot point whether the great hymns, such as 'Abide with me' and 'Jesu, Lover of my soul,' have not been as potent in keeping the soul of the people alive as the greatest creations of literature and art."[46]

Few sacred poets have realized the importance of the hymn as an instrument of religious instruction more clearly than Horatius Bonar. While some of his hymns were sentimental and introspective, and others were often hurried and diffuse, Bonar rarely wrote doggerel: the great majority of his hymns are filled with theological substance. Though his hymns were emotional, their content throughout was Biblical and doctrinal. Beneath all of them lay a substratum of sound and well-digested doctrine, which gave them a spiritual strength they would otherwise have lacked. They did stir emotion, as all good hymns do, but more than that, they caused their singers to learn religious

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[45] W. C. Procter, The Story of Sacred Song, p. 8f.

[46] Gillman, op. cit., p. 28.

truth and meditate upon it. They are not merely emotional effusions on the one hand, nor formal theological statements on the other; they are heartfelt songs of personally experienced doctrine and aspirations, which, because of their doctrinal soundness, are hymns of abiding value.

The doctrine of Bonar's hymns cannot be properly understood apart from his life and experience. The teachings of his hymns are not abstract, analysed, or speculative doctrine; they sprang from his own actual spiritual experiences and were expressed in personal language. His most vital doctrines were not ratiocinations, but a witness of what he himself had experienced by moral and spiritual struggle rather than by intellectual deductions. He rarely argues or engages in controversy in his hymns; his ultimate appeal is always to experience, for his own theology issued from many hours of spiritual travail. "When all is said," writes his daughter in this connection, "I believe the power that has often been found in my father's simplest and least polished utterances, as well as his most musical, lies in this --- that they are utterly true - true, I mean, to his own heart and life."[47]

The value of his hymns would be greatly diminished if there were not behind them a highly cultivated scholar whose knowledge and culture was classical as well as theological. Apart from his love of the classics, however, he seems to have showed little intellectual interest in any other than Biblical

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[47] Bonar, p. 200.

subjects. He was "affected very slightly by current literary moods, still less by the influence of other religious poetry,"[48] writes John Julian. He found his constant inspiration in studying the Bible, which was for him the source of all truth. His extensive and profound mastery of the Scriptures is reflected in his hymns, and many of them were suggested by some Biblical passage or scene.

While his hymns express no originality of doctrine in one sense of the word, they do vivify the orthodox doctrines which he had received from the past, and add the personal testimony of his own genuine experience of the divine life and the theology it involved. It may well be said of him as was said of Charles Wesley: "He blended competent theological knowledge with the deepest religious experience, and expressed it by the least objectionable mode open to the theologian - sacred song."[49]

The main sources of his doctrinal hymns were those truths which formed the substance of his preaching and writing, and which ruled his life: the majesty and love of God, and the blessedness of confidence in that love; the exceeding love of God to man in Jesus Christ, with its mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption, especially the wonder of the blood of the Lamb; the power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man, to convict and convert, to train and sanctify; the sublime freedom of

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[48] Julian, p. 161.

[49] J. Ernest Rattenbury, The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns, p. 85f.

justifying grace, with its walk with God through all the duties and sufferings of this sinful world in a holy life, and its promise of victory over death; the value of the Lord's Supper as the means of the closest communion with God; and the unspeakable brightness of the prospect of the Second Coming of Christ.

Bonar's hymns are thoroughly saturated with the spirit of praise to God: for His power, justice, love and superintending providence over all the vicissitudes of this life. The following piece, typical of many, manifests the writer's spirit of devotion and his sense of God's power in nature:

> Praises to Him who built the hills;
> Praises to Him the streams who fills;
> Praises to him who lights each star
> That sparkles in the blue afar.
>
> Praises to him who makes the morn,
> And bids it glow with beams new-born;
> Who draws the shadows of the night,
> Like curtains, o'er our wearied sight.[50]

Again he sings of God's majesty and power:

> Ascribe ye strength to God!
> The mighty Lord is he,
> The God of majesty,
> Jehovah is His name;
> O'er all the earth His fame:
> Ascribe ye strength to God![51]

of His unchangeableness:

> Light of the world! forever, ever shining,
> There is no change in Thee;
> True light of life, all joy and health enshrining,
> Thou canst not fade nor flee.

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[50] Faith and Hope, II, 39.

[51] Hymns, p. 161.

Thou hast arisen, but Thou descendest never;
Today shines as in the past:
All that Thou wast, Thou art, and shalt be ever,
Brightness from first to last!

Night visits not Thy sky, nor storm, nor sadness;
Day fills up all its blue;
Unfailing beauty, and unfaltering gladness,
And love for ever new![52]

and of His watchful care:

I know thou art not far,
My God, from me; yon star
Speaks of thy nearness, and its rays
Fall on me like thy touch: Oh raise
These eyes of mine
To see thy face, even thine,
My Father and my God![53]

Much of his feeling finds expression in a contemplation of nature as showing forth God's praise in return for His bounty:

From this green earth of ours,
From this wide rolling sea,
From these fair hills and vales,
Praise goeth up to Thee.

From every field and plain,
From every flower and tree,
From every stream and rill,
Praise goeth up to Thee.

God of the heaven and earth,
Thou Lord of all we see,
From this Creation of Thy hand,
Praise goeth up to Thee.

From all that e'er hath been,
From all that yet shall be,
Of thy vast handiwork,
Praise goeth up to Thee.[54]

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[52] Faith and Hope, II, 165. [53] Ibid., II, 62.

[54] Until The Day Break, p. 78f.

Often he simply bursts forth in a song of spontaneous praise, as in the following well known hymn, which utters an ascription of praise to God over and over with a tireless repetition:

> Glory be to God the Father,
> Glory be to God the Son,
> Glory be to God the Spirit,
> Great Jehovah, Three in One;
> Glory, Glory,
> While eternal ages run![55]

Most of his thought concerning God, however, finds expression in God's love for man. One of Bonar's best hymns fully expresses his belief in this all-encompassing love, with the various manifestations of itself in human experience:

> O Love of God, how strong and true!
> Eternal and yet ever new,
> Uncomprehended and unbought,
> Beyond all knowledge and all thought.[56]

Bonar's answering confidence in that love is shown in the following hymn:

> Through good report and evil, Lord
> Still guided by Thy faithful word,
> Our staff, our buckler and our sword,
> We follow Thee.
>
> Whom have we in the heaven above,
> Whom on this earth save Thee to love?
> Still in Thy light we onward move,-
> We follow Thee.[57]

The "unspeakable gift" of God to man in Jesus Christ, with its wonders of Incarnation and Redemption, occupies the

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[55] Faith and Hope, III, 195. [56] Ibid., II, 52. [57] Ibid., III, 112.

subject of many of Bonar's hymns. He sings of the love behind the Incarnation:

> Light of life, Thou liest yonder
> Mystery of mighty love.[58]

rejoices in the glory of the birth of Christ:

> The angel has come down,
> The glory now has shone,
> The shepherds see the light and hear the voice.
> Fear not; behold I bring
> Glad tidings of your King;
> Let all the nations of the earth rejoice.
>
> Sing a new song to-night,
> Sing all ye stars of light,
> The Lord of Glory leaves His glorious heaven.
> To earth behold Him come
> From His celestial home;
> To us a Child is born, a Son is given![59]

a Christ who is truly man and truly God:

> The Christ of God hath come,
> Long promised, long delayed!
> True God, from heaven He cometh down;
> True man, of woman made.
> The Son of God is here:
> O fair and welcome morn;
> God manifest in flesh hath come,
> To us a child is born!
> In lowliness He lies,
> That blessed Babe of heaven;
> Our God for us becometh man,
> To us a Son is given.[60]

While the birth of Jesus is one of the two supreme events in His life, it is His death that dominates everything else in

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[58] Hymns of the Nativity, p. 3. [59] Ibid., p. 8. [60] Ibid., p. 5.

Bonar's thought. Jesus has come down from heaven, dwelling for a short time in a human tabernacle, with a heavenly purpose to which all other things are subordinated. He has come to earth in His love to die as a "substitute" for our sins:

> He cometh in His love,
> For us on earth to live;
> Bearing the burden of our guilt,
> For us His life to give.[61]

This is Bonar's grand theme, and he sings it in all of its variations, pouring forth in hymn after hymn the doctrine of the substitution of Christ for the sinner in the plan of salvation. Here are only a few examples of pieces selected from the many dealing with the subject among his hymns:

> He bore the sin!
> Alone He bore the load;
> For us He drank the cup,-
> Jesus, the Son of God.
> He bore the sin![62]

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> Done is the work that saves!
> Once and for ever done.
> Finished the righteousness
> That clothes the unrighteous one.[63]

* * * * * * *

> From the cross the blood is falling,
> And to us a voice is calling
> Like a trumpet silver-clear.
> 'Tis the voice announcing pardon,
> IT IS FINISHED is its burden,
> Pardon to the far and near.[64]

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[61] Ibid., p. 5.

[62] Ibid., p. 29.

[63] Faith and Hope, III, 67.

[64] Ibid., III, 187.

Bonar recognizes the exceeding sinfulness of man, "Be not deceived," he cries -

> Into each human vein
> Sin penetrates. . .[65]

the impossibility of man's atoning for his own sins:

> Thy cross, not mine, O Christ
> Has borne the awful load
> Of sins, that none in heaven
> Or earth could bear, but God.[66]

and the necessity of Christ's personal interposition as the Redeemer, in order to effect a permanent reconcilation between the Creator and His rebellious creatures:

> Not what these hands have done
> Can save this guilty soul;
> Not what this toiling flesh has borne
> Can make my spirit whole.
>
> Not what I feel or do
> Can give me peace with God;
> Not all my prayers, and sighs, and tears,
> Can bear my awful load.
>
> Thy work alone, O Christ,
> Can ease this weight of sin;
> Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,
> Can give me peace within.[67]

The substitution of Christ's merit for the sinner's guilt was a very personal doctrine for Bonar, and his intensive belief in it is reflected in such words as:

> I hear the words of love,
> I gaze upon the blood,
> I see the mighty sacrifice,
> And I have peace with God.[68]

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[65] Ibid., III, 120. [66] Ibid., I, 149. [67] Ibid., II, 175.
[68] Ibid., II, 155.

and the well-known:

> I lay my sins on Jesus
> The spotless Lamb of God;
> He bears them all and frees us
> From the accursed load.[69]

This relationship to Christ for Bonar is the supreme experience for man:

> To know the Christ of God,
> The everlasting Son;
> To know what He on earth,
> For guilty man has done:
> This is the first and last
> Of all that's true and wise;
> The circle that contains all light
> Beneath, above, the skies.[70]

Bonar held a despairing and melancholy outlook on the world. In his eyes the world was ruled by Satan with the sinful forces of unbelief, error, delusion, pride, and hatred of God in command. For himself he was a stranger in this sinful world:

> I walk as one who knows that he is treading
> A stranger soil,
> As one round whom a serpent-world is spreading
> Its subtle coil.[71]

He was deeply conscious of the short, swift passage of these earthly years:

> Life is the changing deep,
> And I a little wave,
> Rising a moment and then passing down,
> Amid my fellows, to a peaceful grave.[72]

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[69] Ibid., I, 150.

[70] Ibid., II, 134.

[71] Ibid., I, 229.

[72] Ibid., II, 112.

and rejoiced that time was passing:

> Well-pleased I find years rolling o'er me,
> And hear each day time's measured tread;
> Far fewer clouds now stretch before me,
> Behind me is the darkness spread.[73]

No Christian could have his home amid such scenes:

> This is not my place of resting,
> Mine's a city yet to come;
> Onwards to it I am hasting,
> On to my eternal home.[74]

or love this world:

> Love not the world!
> What is there here to love?
> That which is lovable is not of earth;
> Fix thou thine above.[75]

Man must not use his years here for the passing pleasures of the world:

> 'Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,
> And sin is here.
> Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
> A dropping tear.
> We have no time to sport away the hours,
> All must be earnest in a world like ours.[76]

for this life is the proving ground for our souls:

> The life above, when this is past,
> Is the ripe fruit of life below.[77]

The true Christian, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, must

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[73] Ibid., I, 10. [74] Ibid., I, 57. [75] Ibid., III, 119.
[76] Ibid., I, 69. [77] Ibid., II, 130.

part himself from the worldly aims of life that he might spend and be spent in winning souls for Christ:

> Go, labour on; spend, and be spent,-
> Thy joy to do the Father's will;
> It is the way the Master went,
> Should not the servant tread it still?[78]

Bonar devotes many hymns to giving counsel and practical instruction to the Christian seeking to follow "the way the Master went." He must practice the presence of God in his life:

> Begin the day with God!
> He is thy sun and day;
> His is the radiance of thy dawn,
> To him address thy lay.
>
> Take thy first meal with God!
> He is thy heavenly food;
> Feed with and on him; he with thee
> Will feast in brotherhood.
>
> Take thy first walk with God!
> Let him go forth with thee;
> By stream or sea or mountain-path,
> Seek still his company.
>
> Thy first transaction be
> With God himself above;
> So shall thy business prosper well,
> And all the day be love.[79]

endure the sufferings of this world:

> Not first the glad and then the sorrowful,
> But first the sorrowful, and then the glad;
> Tears for a day; for earth is full of tears,
> Then we forget that we were ever sad.[80]

be happy in his reconciled state with God:

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[78] Ibid., I, 225.

[79] Ibid., II, 163f.

[80] Ibid., I, 1.

Be happy in thy God;
On Him cast every load,
To Him bring every care,
To Him pour out thy prayer.[81]

and look to heaven as the goal of life:

Look up, beyond these clouds!
Thither thy pathway lies;
Mount up, away, and linger not,
Thy goal is yonder skies.[82]

Dr. Robertson Nicoll writes that Bonar had a "nostalgia for heaven," and that "all his life on earth he was homesick."[83] This longing for heaven is one of the most striking aspects of his hymns. His "hymns of homesickness" speak of his "dull weight of loneliness" and of his "greedy cravings for the tomb."[84] In one hymn he explains himself:

It is not that I fear
To breast the storm or wrestle with the wave,
To swim the torrent or the blast to brave,
To toil or suffer in this day of strife
As He may will who gave this struggling life;
But I am homesick![85]

Bonar's vehement desire for heaven is further explained in another of his most revealing hymns:

My God, it is not fretfulness
That makes me say "how long?"
It is not heaviness of heart
That hinders me in song;
'Tis not despair of truth and right,
Nor coward dread of wrong.

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[81] Ibid., II, 227. [82] Ibid., II, 164. [83] Memories, p. 104.
[84] W. Robertson Nicoll, op. cit., p. 21. [85] Faith and Hope, I, 21.

But how can I, with such a hope
Of glory and of home;
With such a joy before my eyes,
Not wish the time were come, -
Of years the jubilee, of days
The Sabbath and the sum?

Yet peace, my heart, and hush, my tongue;
Be calm my troubled breast;
Each restless hour is hastening on
The everlasting rest:
Thou knowest that the time thy God
Appoints for thee, is best.

Let faith, not fear nor fretfulness,
Awake the cry, "how long?"
Let no faint-heartedness of soul
Damp thy aspiring song:
Right comes, truth dawns, the night departs
Of error and of wrong.[86]

Heaven to him was the place where all suffering and sorrow would be put away:

No shadows yonder!
All light and song;
Each day I wonder,
And say, How long
Shall time me sunder
From that dear throng?

No weeping yonder!
All fled away;
While here I wander
Each weary day;
And sigh as I ponder
My long, long stay,[87]

where God's children scattered abroad came together in Christ to part no more:

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[86] Ibid., II, 7f.

[87] Ibid., I, 19.

Where no bond is ever sundered;
Partings, clasping, sob and moan,
Midnight waking, twilight weeping,
Heavy noontide, - all are done:
Where the child has found its mother,
Where the mother finds the child,
Where dear families are gathered,
That were scattered on the wild:
Brother, we shall meet and rest
'Mid the holy and the blest![88]

With these views, it was natural for Bonar to hold that death was a welcome release from this world and its woes. In one hymn he says:

I go to life and not to death;
From darkness to life's native sky
I go from sickness and from pain
To health and immortality.

Let our farewell then be tearless,
Since I bid farewell to tears;
Write this day of my departure
Festive in your coming years.[89]

and in another hymn he writes:

Bright morn of morns to me,
When I arise,
Leaving the grave behind;
When these dull eyes
Shall my Redeemer see
In immortality
In yonder skies.[90]

The following characteristic hymn of Bonar's, with its longing for release from this world and its consciousness of immortality, summarizes his "other-worldliness:"

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[88] Ibid., I, 6.

[89] Ibid., II, 122.

[90] Ibid., III, 99.

Upward where the stars are burning,
Silent, silent, in their turning
Round the never-changing pole;
Upward where the sky is brightest,
Upward where the blue is lightest,
Lift I now my longing soul.

Far above that arch of gladness,
Far beyond these clouds of sadness,
Are the many mansions fair.
Far from pain and sin and folly,
In that palace of the holy, -
I would find my mansion there!

Where the glory brightly dwelleth,
Where the new song sweetly swelleth,
And the discord never comes;
Where life's stream is ever laving,
And the palm is ever waving; -
That must be the home of homes.[91]

Nowhere in Bonar's hymns is his broad catholicity of spirit more apparent than in his Communion hymns. Here he has expressed profound Christian doctrines in simple language and in a form which is acceptable to Christians of very diverse opinions. If Dr. H. Bett is justified in his dictum that the Wesleys "evangelized" the Sacrament for their day,[92] it is also true to say that Horatius Bonar tried to make it the rallying-place for Christians of his own day. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in his eyes was the central act of Christian worship; it was "the sign and seal of present and of final bliss."[93] The best known of his Communion hymns

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[91] Ibid., III, 59.

[92] J. Ernest Rattenbury, The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley, p. 19.

[93] John Brownlie, op. cit., p. 231.

exemplifies the spirit which pervades all of them:

> Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face;
> Here would I touch and handle things unseen;
> Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace,
> And all my weariness upon Thee lean.[94]

The key-note struck in Bonar's hymns, however, was the imminency of the Lord's Second Coming. This is the dominant theme in a large number of his hymns, and an ever-recurring one in almost every hymn. In fact his poetical anticipations of the Lord's return are so numerous and so fervent that he has been rightly styled by the Rev. D. M. McIntyre as the "Hymnist of the Advent."[95] Bonar was not interested in determining minor points or dogmatizing on matters of detail in connection with the coming of Christ:

> I know not in what watch He comes,
> Or at what hour he may appear,
> Whether at midnight or at morn,
> Or in what season of the year;
> I only know that He is near.
>
> I know not what of time remains
> To run its course in this low sphere,
> Or what awaits of calm or storm,
> Of joy or grief, or hope or fear;
> I only know that He is near.
>
> The centuries have gone and come,
> Dark centuries of absence drear:
> I dare not chide the long delay,
> Nor ask when I His voice shall hear;
> I only know that He is near.[96]

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[94] Faith and Hope, I, 162.

[95] Memories, p. 48.

[96] Until the Day Break, p. 99f.

Bonar believed that the forces of sin and evil in the world would not be broken until Christ should come; indeed, he believed that these forces would become more deadly, until, immediately before the return of the Lord, these iniquities would be represented by the Anti-Christ himself:

> The serpent's brood increase,
> The powers of hell grow bold,
> The conflict thickens, faith is low,
> And love is waxing cold.
> How long, O Lord our God,
> Holy and true and good,
> Wilt Thou not judge Thy suffering Church,
> Her sighs and tears and blood!
> Come, then, Lord Jesus, come![97]

The return of Christ would be like a sudden thrust of lightning which would smite the forces of evil by the brightness of His appearing and inaugurate a glorious reign of grace:

> Come, Lord, and tarry not,
> Bring the long-looked-for day;
> Oh, why these years of waiting here,
> These ages of delay?
>
> Come in thy glorious might,
> Come with the iron rod,
> Scattering Thy foes before Thy face,
> Most mighty Son of God.
>
> Come, and make all things new,
> Build up this ruined earth;
> Restore our faded Paradise,
> Creation's second birth.
>
> Come, and begin Thy reign
> Of everlasting peace,
> Come, take the kingdom to Thyself,
> Great King of righteousness.[98]

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[97] Faith and Hope, I, 32.

[98] Ibid., I, 254f.

The hope of His return in the darkest hour of its need is the peculiar heritage of the Church:

> Far down the ages now,
> Her journey well-nigh done,
> The pilgrim Church pursues her way,
> In haste to reach the crown.[99]

and of those who call themselves disciples of Christ:

> 'Tis but a little while
> And He shall come again,
> Who died that we might live, who lives
> That we with Him may reign.
>
> Then, O my Lord, prepare
> My soul for that great day;
> O wash me in thy precious blood,
> And take my sins away.[100]

These, then, were the beliefs of Horatius Bonar as they were expressed in his hymns. Dr. Charles Seymour Robinson, speaking of the singing of didactic theology in hymns, asks, "When did Dr. Horatius Bonar ever sing anything else?"[101] Indeed, his hymns were alike in that they were not only a clear and lucid reflection of his own doctrinal position; but, more than that, they served as a vehicle to carry his beliefs to the people of his day in popular form. He was not primarily a poet writing beautiful religious sentiment; he was first and last a preacher expressing the evangelical doctrines of his day in poetical form.

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[99] Ibid., I, 47f.

[100] Ibid., I, 111.

[101] Charles Seymour Robinson, op. cit., p. 252.

C. Evaluation

James Montgomery, one of the first to make a critical study of hymnology, makes an effort in his introductory essay to the Christian Psalmist to show what a hymn should be: "A hymn ought to be as regular in its structure as any other poem; it should have a distinct subject, and that subject should be simple, not complicated, so that whatever skill or labour might be required in the author to develope his plan, there should be little or none required on the part of the reader to understand it. Consequently, a hymn must have a beginning, middle, and end. There should be a manifest gradation in the thoughts, and their mutual dependence should be so perceptible that they could not be transposed without injuring the unity of the piece; every line carrying forward the connection, and every verse adding a well-proportioned limb to a symmetrical body."[102]

How well do the hymns of Horatius Bonar meet these requirements? What are the defects and values in his mass of verse? Perhaps one of the most serious charges levelled at Bonar's hymns is that they "bear the mark of spontaneity and lack of effort."[103] That Bonar wrote much which is lacking in distinction cannot be denied. Much of his verse was too rapidly written and suffers from looseness of construction and too great diffuseness. It might well be said that he wrote too many hymns too quickly for his permanent fame as a

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[102] James Montgomery, The Christian Psalmist, p. xiv.

[103] M. H. James, Hymns and their Singers, p. 135.

hymnist. Certainly it takes no expert's practiced eye to catch "feeble stanzas, halting rhythm, defective rhyme, meaningless iteration;"[104] even a casual observer may see that in many of his hymns there is no "gradation in the thoughts" or "mutual dependence" of verses.[105] While most of his hymns do contain a gracefulness of style and a fancifulness of allusion which indicate a high degree of ability and insight, only a small number of them might be considered as being pieces of finished poetic beauty. It must be remembered, however, that everything that Bonar wrote was subordinated to a religious object, and that much of his poetry is really rhymed meditations or prayers and only poetry by accident. Also it is doubtful that Bonar ever took himself seriously as a poet, at least until his later life, when his departure from his usual medium of expression in his long blank-verse poem My Old Letters might be construed as a sign of literary feeling. But certainly he never wrote "art for art's sake" -- he always used verse for a preacher's purpose rather than a poet's.

By far the most frequent criticism of Bonar's hymns is that they are "defeatist" and reflect an attitude of pessimism. Dr. J. B. Reeves says, "Bonar's hymns are sorrowful and plaintive, like autumn winds over Scottish hills."[106] Another writer, M. H. James, states that they are pervaded by

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[104] Julian, p. 161.

[105] Most of Bonar's hymns in current use have been considerably abridged.

[106] J. B. Reeves, The Hymn As Literature, p. 290.

"a touch of melancholy as well as solemnity."[107] Bonar's habitual pensive and often melancholy reflections set a tone to most of his writings which has little appeal to the ordinary Christian of today. The majority of his sentiments, however appealing to Christians when he wrote them, are foreign to present-day mentality and modes of speech. It is possible, however, to make out a case for a sparing use of them for special occasions or for people who are passing through experiences which set them apart from the mass of their fellows. Thus, C. S. Phillips, speaking of Bonar's 'Thy way, not mine, O Lord,' says: "Yet, after all, it reflects the earthly lot of a large number of our fellow human-beings, and when sung by a gathering of tired and worn working-class mothers may have an intense pathos."[108]

Still another alleged defect of his hymns is that they are too "emotional." Sir Edmund Gosse had a great dislike for Bonar's hymns for this reason. Speaking of his early youth, he writes: "It was my Father's plan from the first to keep me entirely ignorant of the poetry of the High Church, which deeply offended his Calvinism; he thought that religious truth could be sucked in, like mother's milk, from hymns which were godly and sound, and yet correctly versified; I was therefore carefully trained in this direction from an early date. But my spirit had rebelled against some of these hymns, especially

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[107] M. H. James, op. cit., p. 131.

[108] C. S. Phillips, Hymnody Past and Present, p. 6f.

those written - a mighty multitude - by Horatius Bonar; naughtily refusing to read Bonar's 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' to my Mother in our Penilica Lodgings. A secret hostility to this particular form of effusion was already, at the age of seven beginning to define itself in my brain."[109] David R. Breed, while acknowledging the beauty of some of Bonar's hymns, says, "The emotional preponderates in them. Even when they urge activity, it is not so much as a call to duty, as an encouragement to the worker."[110] "Such criticism often proceeds," says C. S. Phillips, "from a cultivated artistic circle which is rather out of touch with the workaday world of the common man,"[111] and fails to make a very clear distinction between sentiment and sentimentality. However, it is true that the emotional aspect does "preponderate" in most of Bonar's hymns; for example, their use of the name "Jesus" is as noticeable as in the hymns of Ray Palmer. The very nature of a hymn, however, demands that it stir the emotions, and all good hymns must be emotional. Moreover, the charge that they are mere sentimental "effusions" is not true. Most of Bonar's hymns were written for those who were in the depths of sin, loneliness and despair, or whose hearts were ecstatic with the happiness of a new Christian experience. Unlike those of Watts, for example, they do not express an average religious sentiment

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[109] Edmund Gosse, A Study of Two Temperments, p. 88f.

[110] David R. Breed, The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn-Tunes, p. 226.

[111] C. S. Phillips, op. cit., p. 254. His discussion on this subject is excellent, see pp. 249-259.

and cannot be sung by any congregation. Also it must be recalled that they were typical in spirit of their age and style, and had far less of a sentimental nature than most of the hymns of Bonar's Victorian contemporaries. Moreover, there is little reason for supposing that the best hymns are purely or even primarily aesthetic. An emotional hymn which means something to those who sing it is more acceptable than the choicest hymn sung with coldness and boredom. Finally, Bonar's deep grasp of sound Christian doctrine expressed in his hymns saves them from the category of being merely sentimental introspective writings.

A final criticism against Bonar's hymns is that they are so concerned with obsolete theological doctrines, particularly his continual contemplation of the Second Advent, as to make them unacceptable to the vast majority of present-day Christians. This charge is indeed ironical when it is remembered that it was exactly his faithful adherence and teaching of these doctrines which made his hymns popular with so many Christians in his own day, as Canon Duncan shows in the following statement: "Their homely graceful style, their personal devotion to Christ, their faithful reflection of Bible truth, their belief in and their longing for the Second Advent, and their tender sympathy with the wants and aspirations of the human soul, made them welcome to thousands of the followers of Christ Jesus."[112] It is a criticism, however, which could be made of almost all

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[112] Canon Duncan, op. cit., p. 183f.

hymn-writers. Most of their hymns have only a transient currency; only a fraction deserve to survive their own generation. It is not their fault that, being human, they can only attempt to minister to the spiritual needs of their own times, and that few of their hymns strike such a universal need of mankind that they transcend the critical judgement of time. That Bonar abundantly met the needs of a great many Christians of his own day is evidenced by their popularity when early in 1887 the editors of the Sunday At Home invited their readers to send in lists of the hundred English hymns which stood highest in their esteem. Bonar's hymns selected in order of their preference were:

9 'I heard the voice of Jesus say'
18 'A few more years shall roll'
39 'Thy way, not mine, O Lord'
43 'I lay my sins on Jesus'
75 'I was a wandering sheep'[113]

Also in 1887 the British Weekly requested their readers to name the twelve best British hymn-writers and the twelve best British hymns. The returns were tabulated with the following results:

The twelve best British hymn-writers:

Charles Wesley, Issac Watts, James Montgomery, Horatius Bonar, William Cowper, Phillip Doddridge, John Keble, Reginald Heber, Augustus M. Toplady, John Newton, Henry F. Lyte, Francis R. Havergal.

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[113] A Hundred Hymns Selected by Readers of the 'Sunday at Home' as the best in the English Language.

The twelve best British Hymns:

> Rock of Ages; Abide with me; Jesus, Lover of my soul; Just as I am; Sun of my soul; Lead Kindly Light; How sweet the name of Jesus sounds; I heard the voice of Jesus say; Nearer my God to thee; From Greenlands icy mountains; My God, my Father, while I stray; Art thou weary, art thou languid?[114]

As a matter of fact, Bonar's hymns have survived the harrowing effects of time far better than most other hymn-writers. While many of his hymns have been rightly discarded, even by the uncritical multitude, most of his hymns in current use bear eloquent testimony to the fact that his best hymns answer some of the deep-seated spiritual needs of men in every generation. It is safe to say that in almost any representative hymn-book of today, including that of the Roman Catholic Church, his name will be among the ten largest contributors to the collection.[115]

Thus it could be said of Bonar's hymns as was said of Charles Wesley's by John Wesley: "Some were bad, some mean, and some most excellently good."[116] When the ephemeral and the transitory have been given up, there remains a series of masterly hymns by Bonar. His best hymns are characterized by a native strength, a simplicity of expression, and a homeliness of style which number them among the most beautiful and poetic of all hymns. At least one of his hymns, 'I heard the voice of Jesus say,' was named by Bishop Fraser of Manchester as the greatest

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[114] The British Weekly, April 22, 1887. [115] For a listing of Bonar's hymns in representative modern hymnals, see Appendix.

[116] J. Ernest Rattenbury, The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns, op. cit., p. 55.

hymn in the English language.[117] This ingenious hymn contains the repeated call of the Saviour and the response of the sinner:

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad,
I found in Him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water,- thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream,
My thirst was quench'd, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light,
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright.
I look'd to Jesus, and I found
In Him, my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till travelling days are done.[118]

David R. Breed says of this hymn: "The balancing of the call of Jesus and the soul's response is exceedingly graceful, forceful, and suggestive. This is perfectly represented in the tune Vox Deliciti, written for the hymn by the Rev. John B. Dykes, in which the plaintive minor of the first half of each verse is followed by the glowing major of the second half. This hymn, sung to this tune, is seldom surpassed in Church music."[119]

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[117] Adam Phillip, The Devotional Literature of Scotland, p. 114.

[118] Faith and Hope, I, 158f. [119] David R. Breed, op. cit., p. 225.

Another hymn which is beautiful for its spiritual comprehensiveness is 'I lay my sins on Jesus.' This lovely hymn begins with the removal of the sinner's guilt and passes on to the supplying of his wants, the comfort of his sorrows, his imitation of the Saviour's example, his growth in his likeness and the eternal joy of his presence:

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us
From the accursed load.
I bring my guilt to Jesus
To wash my crimson stains,
White in his blood most precious,
Till not a spot remains.[120]

Bonar's own favorite among his hymns, 'When the weary seeking rest,' with its tearful compassion for the sorrowing, and successive bursts of passionate pleading on their behalf is typical of his best verse:

When the weary, seeking rest,
To thy goodness flee;
When the heavy laden cast
All their load on thee.
When the troubled, seeking peace,
On thy name shall call;
When the sinner, seeking life,
At thy feet shall fall:
Hear then, in love, O Lord, the cry,
In heaven, thy dwelling-place on high.[121]

His yearning intercession for children is characteristic in its childlike simplicity of much of his work:

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[120] Faith and Hope, I, 150f.

[121] Ibid., III, 104f.

Father, our children keep!
We know not what is coming on the earth;
Beneath the shadow of Thy heavenly wing,
Oh keep them, keep them, Thou who gav'st them birth.[122]

These hymns, and others like them in spirit, have found their way around the world and into the hearts of countless thousands of devoted Christians of all denominations. In the words of the Rev. R. H. Lundie, "The history would be voluminous and of tender interest, if it could be written, of the dark souls enlightened, the troubled souls comforted, the dying souls revived, by repeated or remembered verses of Horatius Bonar's hymns."[123] Such hymns will cause the name of the "prince of evangelical singers"[124] to be ever cherished in grateful remembrance.

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[122] Ibid., III, 217.

[123] Memorial, p. 21.

[124] Statement by Millar Patrick, op. cit., p. 168.

CHAPTER III

THEOLOGIAN

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Introduction

In order to understand fully Bonar's doctrinal position and appraise his influence as a theologian, it is necessary to survey the theological climate in which he lived.

A. Theological Scene

It was in the last part of the eighteenth century that most of the ideas came to birth which were to shape the comprehensive theological reconstruction of the nineteenth. The eighteenth century in Britian was marked by a dominant rationalism which placed its faith in the power of speculative reason to obtain ultimate truth. Along with this emphasis on the powers of reason, which had arisen out of the mechanistic implications of Newtonian science,[1] were blended the empirical tendencies inaugurated by Locke. While both schools of thought agreed that all knowledge was something given, with the mind as only its passive recipient, the extreme rationalists sought to

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[1]See John Herman Randall, The Making of the Modern Mind, p. 389.

derive all knowledge from the constitution of the mind itself, and the empirical group held that all knowledge rises purely from without from experienced perceptions.

In Scotland this prevailing rationalism met an opponent in David Hume, whose skepticism denied the possibility of demonstrative proof by any process of ratiocination.[2] A noteworthy reaction to Hume took the form of the Scottish school of "common sense" philosophy. With Thomas Reid and James Beattie as its proponents, "it maintained that the starting point of sound philosophy must be the instinctive beliefs, which though not logically demonstrable, are nevertheless real and indubitable, and must be accepted as the ultimate basis of faith and reason."[3] Despite this and other conceptions which pointed the way to a faith not dependent on external evidences, but on internal and spiritual truths, rationalism had its influence on theological thought throughout the century, issuing mainly in what may be described as a positive strain of influence and a reactionary strain.

Under its positive influence theologians imbibed the principles and spirit of rationalism to such an extent that theology was gradually paralysed and reached a state of virtual stagnation. Dr. Otto Pfleiderer describes this combination of faith in revealed religion and Lock's Eng-

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[2] See John Cunningham, The Church History of Scotland, II, 349f.

[3] Andrew J. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, 1707-1929, p. 138.

lish empiricism as "rational supernaturalism."[4] It conceived the truth of revelation as being based on external evidences, supported by miracles and prophecies in the Bible. The God of revelation was thought of in Deistical forms, and all vivid religious feeling was repudiated as mystical "enthusiasm,"[5] In Scotland the Calvinistic creed that had done so much to mould the national character was largely intellectual, having been scholastically systematized in the Westminster Standards. And even Scottish piety could be described as intellectual rather than devotional.[6]

A natural outgrowth of this rationalistic influence on theological thought was the development of Christian apologetics. The most important theological dispute of the century, the Deistic controversy, which mirrored the theological mind of the time, brought forth apologies from writers on both sides. Orthodox and Deist opponents had much in common: the orthodox merely added Scripture to natural religion and "rational Christianity was substantially cryptodeism."[7] Joseph Butler's Analogy was the most successful effort made by orthodoxy to crush Deism. While he more than answered the Deistic attack, he carried his argument only as far as the probability of analogical knowledge of God.[8] After the death of the Deistic controversy, and the philosophical movement

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[4]Otto Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology, p. 303.

[5]Ibid., p. 303. [6]Cunningham, op. cit., p. 421.

[7]Ernest Campbell Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason, p. 125.

[8]See Ibid., p. 84.

begun by Locke had been brought to a standstill by the criticism of David Hume, the method of abstract speculation was gradually abandoned and a more historical attitude adopted. Concern shifted in the latter part of the century from the internal evidences of Christianity to the external.[9] Paley with his creed of theological utilitarianism reflects the general temper of the time.[10] It was plain that new principles and new methods were needed for theological advance, but as yet they were developing under the surface and theology was hardly affected by them.

The reactionary strain of the influence of rationalism on theology took the form of a revolt against the rule of reason. In Britian the reaction against formal rationalism and moral laxity was led by John Wesley. Disavowing the power of reason, and rebelling against the skepticism and religious indifference of his day, he insisted that religious faith can never be founded primarily on argument; its basis must lie in an appeal to the heart and the will. A master in rousing religious emotions, he greatly stimulated the cause of Evangelical religion, and the revival he began helped to restore the emotions to their rightful place in religion. This was true to such an extent that Pfleiderer, describing the state of religious life in Britian at the beginning of the nineteenth century, uses the term "Evangelicalism" to

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[9] See Vernon F. Storr, The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1860, p. 44f.

[10] Ibid., p. 59f.

complement "Rational Supernaturalism."[11]

Although Evangelicalism made few lasting inroads into Scotland through the Wesleyan Revival, friends of Evangelical religion were multiplying everywhere. From the beginning of the eighteenth century there had set in a decline of the evangelical spirit which had reached its zenith under men like Samuel Rutherford, William Guthrie, and John Livingstone. With Principal Robertson as its leading spirit a group of "Moderates," recoiling from the somewhat rough dogmatic forms of an Evangelicalism which was not well adapted to meet the new culture of the age, soon became the dominant party in the church.[12] During the century, however, the church was gradually divided into two generally recognized camps, known as Moderates and Evangelicals. The principal line of division between the two groups appeared in their attitudes toward the exercise of patronage, with Robertson and his group bending all their energies to give full and constant effect to the Patronage Act of Queen Anne. Although there were varying shades within the parties, the Moderates tended more to scholarly pursuits and regarded all enthusiasm in religion as "fanaticism," while Evangelicals gave more attention to emotional expression in religion and the content of their preaching was more theological. Generally speaking there was little difference in regard to their theo-

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[11] Pfleiderer, op. cit., p. 303.

[12] See William G. Blaikie, The Preachers of Scotland, p. 21f.

logical systems. Both "believed that theology was static, and that no further development was to be expected or desired."[13] The difference was mainly one of emphasis, the Evangelicals adhering to the "peculiar doctrines of Christianity," especially justification by faith, while the Moderates insisted mainly upon the keeping of the commandments, their temper being more philosophical and ethical than theological.[14] Some of the Moderates went too far in "the sweet reasonableness of their moderation," and their sermons, that were often "a cauld clatter of morality,"[15] lacking in orthodox doctrine and apostolic zeal, failed to guide men through the perplexities of a changing world. In due course the pendulum swung back, and in the early nineteenth century the Evangelical revival, connected with men like Andrew Thomson, under whose preaching "a torch was lifted up in Scotland before which the Moderatism of the Church steadily waned,"[16] and Thomas Chalmers, breathed fresh power into Scottish religion.

It was fortunate for Evangelicalism in Scotland that it was mediated through "the big brain and big heart of Chalmers," which prevented the "petty aspect" that developed in England.[17] He did much to rid the Evangelical movement of its

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[13] Campbell, op. cit., p. 185f.

[14] William M. Taylor, The Scottish Pulpit from the Reformation to the Present Day, p. 142f.

[15] G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p. 459.

[16] Norman L. Walker, Scottish Church History, p. 130.

[17] James Stalker, "Evangelicalism," The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V, 605.

intellectual blight. While the Evangelical doctrines assumed a new importance in his hands, they came from him supported by intellect and imagination, allies of the science, philosophy and culture of the age. "The effect of all," states Blaikie, "was not merely the triumph of evangelical religion in Scotland, but the communication to it of qualities it had hardly known before."[18]

The quickened religious feeling and zealous philanthropic efforts brought about by the Evangelical revival in the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, were generally so much cut off from the thought of the age as to have little influence upon British theology. To bring new life and movement into theology, a complete revolution in the minds of men was needed. On the Continent, and particularly in Germany, an intellectual revolution had already taken place, and as Pfleiderer indicates, the revolution in Britain followed in part from the direct influence of idealism as it had sprung from German Romanticism.[19]

Although the majority of British theologians entrenched themselves in opposition to them, the forces were slowly accumulating which were to revolutionize British theology in the nineteenth century. The decade which followed 1820 saw the birth of three distinct movements which were to affect vitally the history of Christian thought. These movements were:

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[18] Blaikie, op. cit., p. 287.

[19] Pfleiderer, op. cit., p. 303f.

the critical and historical work of the liberal theologians of the Oriel school; the emergence in Scotland, under the leadership of Thomas Erskine and John McLeod Campbell, of a theology which rebelled against the narrow dogmatism and rigid externality of forensic Scottish Calvinism and made personal experience and the inner witness of the heart the starting-points of their faith; and the religious idealism of Coleridge which appealed to a philosophy more satisfying than utilitarianism. As the century progressed it witnessed a series of rapid changes before which the traditional theology found itself powerless. The inevitable growth of the historical and comparative methods made possible the steady advance of Biblical criticism before which the traditional theory of plenary inspiration had to give way. The achievements of physical science, especially the conception of evolution, were modifying man's view of himself and his world. "It was essentially a time," states Storr, "in which large ideas and principles were germinating - a time of the growth of potent, spiritual forces, destined to reshape the whole thought of mankind."[20] Despite the tenacity with which most Scottish thinkers clung to the traditional views, they could not remain aloof from the changes; they were bound to be influenced by, if not caught up in, the new currents of thought which were bringing about a complete reconstruction of belief.

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[20] Storr, op. cit., p. 7.

B. Bonar's Doctrinal Position

One who stood like a rock amidst the swirling currents of changing thought was Horatius Bonar. It is safe to say that in the fifty long years of his ministry he did not modify or change his mind on a single item of doctrine. Reared in a fervent Evangelical atmosphere, trained in the Calvinist tradition at the feet of Chalmers, Bonar accepted and clung to the substance of what had been handed down from the past. It was not blind veneration, says Dr. George Wilson: "it came to him not by drift, but by the reading that means seeking, by the thinking that means struggling, by prayer that means wrestling."[21] Though he did not make an idol of his ancestral creed, his innate conservatism dominated and colored all his thinking. Scottish theological isolation, of course, can account for a good deal of it, but even after 1860 when theological upheaval became general and many thinkers were forced out of their attitude of isolation, he carried on an incessant warfare with the forces arrayed before the citadel of Evangelical tradition. And even as the outworks were carried one by one, he stood steadfast and loyal, ready to defend to the end "the faith once delivered to the saints."

The preliminary step to any systematizing of Bonar's doctrinal position is to demonstrate his belief in the Bible as the authoritative word of God. Not for a moment did he doubt the divine origin of the Scriptures. The bed-rock of

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21 Memories, p. 122.

his system was the authority of the written word, the inspiration of the letter of Scripture. Underlying his whole thought was the unquestioning acceptance of the truth of the Biblical narrative in its literal meaning. For him the Bible was not simply the record of a divine revelation - the very page itself was sacred. It was not only the word, it was the words of God. "We are possessors of an authentic volume of heavenly truth," he maintains. "It contains the words as well as the thoughts of God. It deals with the invisible and supernatural; - past, present, and future; nor does it apologise for so doing. It makes no attempt to conciliate the wise of this world, nor to allow for human prejudices; but calmly and with dignity records its facts and doctrines for the acceptance or rejection of man. It does not pare down the miraculous in order to make it less obnoxious to reason or more accordant with probability and the laws of nature. It does not minimise the infinite and the eternal, in order to render them more credible. The writers write with authority, and assume the entire accuracy of the words they use; they profess to be able to disclose secrets which only God can know, both as to the long past and the far distant future; and the information which they give us as to these is Divine."[22]

The Bible thus formed a body of divine truth revealed by God to man. What we are to believe, what we are to do, what we are to worship, are not matters of opinion or speculation:

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22 Horatius Bonar, Our Ministry, p. 60.

they are truths not reasoned out by man, but dictated to us by God.[23] Its statements, whether they are related to science, or history, or religion, were to be accepted without questioning. It was to be considered apart from all other writings, and its various books were regarded as being all on the same level of inspiration, and as having been produced under a divine superintendence which protected them from error. Man has no right to think for himself apart from this revelation of God. The authority of Scripture must be implicity relied upon, and the integrity of the whole of Scripture must never be questioned: "Each word in the Bible is to be dealt with as a sacred thing, a vessel of the sanctuary, not to be lightly handled or profanely mutilated, but to be received just as it stands. There may be passages difficult to reconcile, doctrines which apparently conflict with each other. But let us beware of smoothing down, or hammering in pieces, one class of passages, in order to bring about a reconciliation. Let us be content to take them as they are. We shall gain nothing by explaining them away. God has spoken them. God has placed them there. They cannot really be at variance with each other. The day is coming when we shall fully understand their harmony."[24]

Bonar rebelled against the growth of a Biblical criticism which compelled many Evangelicals to modify their views as to the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

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[23] See Horatius Bonar, Man: His Religion and His World, p. 10.

[24] Horatius Bonar, Truth and Error, p. 5f.

Acceptance of any of the results of such criticism was equivalent to unsoundness of faith and disloyalty to the Church, and was to be explained by the presence of some moral defect in the critic.[25] Progressiveness in regard to the Scriptures should consist only of the fuller understanding of the Word itself: "Our progressiveness consists in the fuller discernment of all parts of Revelation, - historical, prophetical, doctrinal, practical, and the more careful exploration of its inexhaustible pages. We add nothing to, and we subtract nothing from, the perfection of that profoundest of all profound volumes, but we make daily discoveries in its depths. We do not pretend to prop it up, as if it were on any side giving way; we confide in it as a fortress impregnable against all assaults, and we wonder at it as an anvil on which a thousand hammers have already broken themselves, and which stands in its own Divine greatness courting the strokes of a thousand more."[26]

Despite the continual growth of Biblical criticsm in Britian during the nineteenth century, Bonar found no necessity for a surrender of ancient landmarks, or a desertion of long-accepted creeds. As late as the year 1879 he declared his firm faith in the Scriptures at the Phophetical Conference at Mildmay: "I feel a vastly greater <u>certainty</u>, as years roll on, with regard to the Divine Authority and verbal inspiration of the Word of God. If ever, as to these points, a doubt has passed through

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[25] See <u>Ibid</u>., p. 18f.

[26] <u>Our Ministry</u>, <u>op. cit</u>., p. 85f.

my mind with respect to this Book, that doubt has disappeared. And then, in connection with this, I feel greater and greater certainty as to the literal interpretation of the whole Word of God, historical, doctrinal, and prophetical. LITERAL, if possible, is, I believe, the only maxim that will carry you right through the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation."[27]

In Bonar's doctrinal position, Soteriology occupies the central place. Christ as the crucified Saviour of sinful man is the main theme of most of his writings. "We are witnesses of the one High Priest, the one altar, the one mercy seat, the one sanctuary, the 'house not made with hands'; for all our ministry rests upon the finished propitiation of Him whose body is at once the true temple and the true sacrifice, of Him who is the 'Word made flesh,' 'who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.'"[28] In whatever aspect of the doctrine of Christ he was dealing, the soteriological emphasis was always given. Little attention was paid to the historical life of Jesus or the preparation for His coming. Even the revealing phase of the Incarnation was only subsidiary to the reconciling purpose of Christ in Bonar's view. While the character of God is revealed in the Incarnation, he notes, "mere incarnation can do nothing for the sinner."[29] Indeed, he maintains, "it was His death that made His in-

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[27] Memorial, p. 102.

[28] Our Ministry, op. cit., p. 88f.

[29] Horatius Bonar, The Rent Veil, p. 39.

carnation available for sinners; it was from the cross of Golgotha that the cradle of Bethlehem derived all its value and its virtue."[30] The Atonement was not only the unique and supreme act of Christ's life, the whole purpose of His coming into the world was for this ministry of reconciliation.[31]

Two beliefs were fundamental to this doctrine in Bonar's eyes. The first was the assertion of the depravity of human nature as the ground and occasion of Christ's redemptive work. At the very core of his whole system of Christian truth was the simple proposition that Man is a Sinner: "The real question of the present day is just this, - Is man a totally and thoroughly depraved being by nature? Is he ruined, helpless, blind, dead in trepasses and sins? Many other questions have arisen, but this is the centre one. According to the views we entertain regarding this will be our views on other points. It is upon the truth of this doctrine that the whole Bible proceeds. And hence I would warn you strongly against any attempt to modify, or abate, or dilute the statements of Scripture on this point."[32]

Bonar cared little about investigating the metaphysical nature of sin; he cared less about considering sin in the abstract. He made no attempt to offer a full solution to the problem of the origin of evil. As the existence of holiness was the result of God's "direct decretive will," the

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[30] Ibid., p. 54. [31] Horatius Bonar, The Night of Weeping, p. 1.

[32] Truth and Error, op. cit., p. viii.

existence of ungodliness was the result of His "indirect permissive will."[33] "The existence of a holy, happy world proves that God had created it with His own hand. The existence of an unholy, unhappy world, proves that God allowed it to fall into that state; otherwise it could not have so fallen: - but it proves nothing more."[34] He accepted Scripture's historical account of sin's entrance into the world. The earth, as it came out of the mould of its Maker, was altogether good. "Nought but blessedness breathed through its atmosphere or shone in its light."[35] Man, too, was holy. "He knew not what it was to sin, nor how such a thing as evil could find its way into a world so fair."[36] The rupture between God and man did not begin on the side of God. "It was not till after man had disobeyed that the veil was let down which separated God from man, which made a distinction between the dwellings of man and the habitation of God."[37] The sin of Adam interrupted God in telling the story of his goodness, and his covenant with God was broken, making him a transgressor against the will of God. The consequences of his yielding to temptation placed a curse upon him and all humanity by an angry, righteous God. That curse is still upon the world, and all men are born into sin.[38] This depravity of man is thorough and total. Each man of his own will is an

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[33] Ibid., p. 27.

[34] Ibid., p. 29.

[35] Horatius Bonar, The Story of Grace, p. 3.

[36] Ibid., p. 3.

[37] The Rent Veil, op. cit., p. 11.

[38] The Story of Grace, op. cit., p. 24.

enemy of God: "Is it not a fact, that every step you take is voluntary, and that every feeling you cherish towards God is entirely unconstrained and unforced from without? If so, then there is still an awful mass of guilt for which you are accountable, even though you could prove that the origin of it may be urged as an extenuation or an excuse. Whatever the fall did, it never forced you to commit a single sin. Whatever may be your original corruption, you cannot say that it ever compelled you to sin against your will."[39]

Along with this Augustinian emphasis upon the voluntary nature of sin,[40] Bonar sounded a positive note in his conception by accentuating our willful disobedience to the law of God. What was most important to him was to establish the fact of the diseased condition of all men in order to lead them to a remedy. "One single transgression of a soul is inefaceable," cries Bonar, "it can neither be recalled nor cast out of being. Once done, it stands; and with it stands its penalty. In such a case, finite help is vain. To efface the inefaceable! To eradicate the ineradicable! How vain and hopeless!"[41]

As the bright complement to this dark picture, in Bonar's thought, stood the cross of Christ, conceived of as the ground of God's forgiveness and the only hope of the sinner. In the matter of punishment for sin Bonar taught a doctrine of

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[39] Truth and Error, op. cit., p. 138.

[40] See H. R. Mackintosh, "Sin," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XI, 539ff.

[41] Man: His Religion and His World, op. cit., p. 52.

divine substitution.[42] Christ bore on the cross, instead of man, the punishment which sin deserves. "In person and in work, in life and in death," notes Bonar,"Christ is the sinner's substitute. His vicariousness is co-extensive with the sins and wants of those whom He represents, and covers all the different periods as well as the varied circumstances of their lives."[43] Substitution was the divine remedy for the ruin wrought by sin, and no other way could be considered: "No unsacrificial cross can pacify the conscience. No semi-sacrificial victim or quasi-substitutional propitiation will accomplish reconciliation and bid fear depart, bring God and man together in righteous relationship, never to be broken."[44]

From the beginning God had affirmed this principle in His dealings with man.[45] The various sacrifices of the Old Testament were a preparation for the real sacrifice which was to come in Christ.[46] Christ had "entered our world as the substitute."[47] Every aspect of his life - his birth in poverty, his banishment to Egypt, his circumcision, his baptism - intimated his work; but the completeness of his substitution was to be found on the cross, where He died for our sins: "There the whole burden pressed upon Him, and the wrath of God took

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[42] See Horatius Bonar, God's Way of Peace, pp. 64-77.

[43] Horatius Bonar, The Everlasting Righteousness, p. 26; cf. Horatius Bonar, "The Sin-Bearer," No. 34, The Kelso Tracts.

[44] Our Ministry, op. cit., p. 112. [45] See Horatius Bonar, The Christ of God, p. 4ff. [46] The Everlasting Righteousness, op. cit., pp. 14-25; cf. The Rent Veil, op. cit., pp. 21-33.

[47] The Everlasting Righteousness, op. cit., p. 26.

hold of Him, and the sword of Jehovah smote Him; He poured out His soul unto death, and He was cut off out of the land of the living. Then the work was done. 'It is finished.' The blood of the burnt-offering was shed. The propitiation was made; the transgression finished; and the everlasting righteousness brought in."[48]

Thus the sacrificial blood-shedding of Christ on the cross secures our reconciliation with God. The death of Christ was regarded as effecting a change in God's attitude to man. The divine wrath, appeased by the sacrifice on the cross, becomes the divine favor for all who would accept the proffered salvation.

Great importance was attached by Bonar to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the reality of His operation in the human heart.[49] The Spirit not only works through the Bible,[50] but has direct and immediate access to the soul.[51] The Holy Spirit is "a workman within, carrying on His operations there, quickening, fashioning, moulding all things to His will, - bringing every part of the soul into contact with the truth that is without, by means of the pressure of His own hand from within."[52] His enlightenment convinces men of their sin and sinfulness, and inspires them to repentance and conversion. Growth in character, and the gradual eradication of sinful

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[48] Ibid., p. 36. [49] See God's Way of Peace, op. cit., p. 99f.

[50] Truth and Error, op. cit., p. 167; cf. Horatius Bonar, "The Works of the Holy Spirit," No. 9, 13, The Kelso Tracts.

[51] Truth and Error, op. cit., p. 185.

[52] Ibid., p. 189.

tendencies, are possible only by His aid.[53] This emphasis on the work of the Spirit by Bonar occasioned some surprise in the early part of his ministry at Kelso. After Bonar had preached a series of sermons on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, the Rev. James Johnston wrote: "The opinion was almost universal that the doctrines taught were not only strange but altogether unsound, many regarded them as little, if any, short of blasphemy."[54] As a matter of fact Bonar was only giving voice to a common emphasis among the Evangelicals of his day.[55]

Justification by faith was one of Bonar's watchwords. "Faith," he says, "is just receiving as true what God declares to be so. Christ and his work are the things which God has revealed for salvation, and therefore saving faith is just believing to be true what God has told us regarding Christ and his work."[56] Sinful man's justification before God can be obtained through faith alone, in particular through the unquestioning acceptance of the saving power of Christ's death upon the cross. This theme rang forth clearly from pulpit and pen through all the years of his ministry. His ministerial jubilee was a time to reiterate his view of the way of salvation: "Righteousness without works to the sinner, simply on his acceptance of the divine message concerning Jesus and His

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[53] Horatius Bonar, The Way of Holiness, p. 40f.

[54] Jubilee, p. 37.

[55] Storr, op. cit., p. 68.

[56] Horatius Bonar, "Believe and Live," No. 5, Kelso Tracts, p. 1.

sufficiency, - this has been the burden of our good news. 'Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.' It is one message, one gospel, one cross, one sacrifice, from which nothing can be taken, and to which nothing can be added. This is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending of our ministry."[57]

The righteousness which God has provided for us, and which comes to us by believing in Christ, is presented to all without distinction. Our justification gives us a legal right to the blessings of God, said Bonar. It is understood, not in a personal, but in a judicial or forensic sense. The change is not in a man, but in his relation to God. "On our part there is the 'believing;' on God's part, the 'imputing' or reckoning. We believe, He imputes; and the whole transaction is done. The blood (as 'atoning' or 'covering') washes off our guilt; the righteousness presents us before God as legally entitled to that position of righteousness which our surety holds, as being Himself not merely the righteous One, but 'Jehovah OUR righteousness."[58]

No distinctions were made by Bonar in the nature of the faith efficacious for salvation. "It is simply in believing," he states, "feeble as our faith may be, - that we are invested with this righteousness. For faith is no work, nor merit, nor

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[57] Memorial, p. 93.

[58] The Everlasting Righteousness, op. cit., p. 72.

effort; but the cessation from all these, and the acceptance in place of them of what another has done, - done completely and for ever."[59]

The assurance of salvation is not a constituent element of faith but a normal consequence of it: "Assurance does not save us; and they have erred who have spoken of assurance as indispensable to salvation. For we are not saved by believing in our own salvation, nor by believing anything whatsoever about ourselves. We are saved by what we believe about the Son of God and His righteousness. The gospel believed saves; not the believing in our own faith. Nevertheless, let us know that assurance was meant to be the portion of every believing sinner. It was intended not merely that he should be saved, but that he should know that he is saved, and so delivered from all fear and bondage, and heaviness of heart."[60] To an Arminian who denies election and the perseverance of the saints, the knowledge of our present reconciliation to God might bring with it no assurance of final salvation, since we may be in reconciliation today and out of it tomorrow; but to a Calvinist there could be no such separation. "He who is once reconciled is reconciled for ever; and the knowledge of filial relationship just now is the assurance of eternal salvation. Indeed, apart from God's electing love, there can be no such thing as assurance."[61]

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[59] Ibid., p. 75.

[60] Ibid., p. 173f.

[61] Ibid., p. 167.

Faith is in no way opposed to good works, except where the question is one of the grounds of our acceptance with God. Good works have no merit in themselves to procure salvation, but they are the necessary outcome of a living faith. "We are justified," says Bonar, "that we may be holy. The possession of this legal righteousness is the beginning of a holy life. We do not live a holy life in order to be justified; but we are justified that we may live a holy life."[62] Our progress in the holy life, whether rapid or gradual, springs from the forgiveness we have received, and the new life imparted by the Holy Spirit. The justifying cross of Christ stands between us and all evil things, and arrests our backward step: "At the door of the theatre, or the ball-room, or the revel-hall, stands the cross, and forbids his entrance. The world is crucified to him, and he unto the world, by the saving cross."[63]

Bonar's conception of holiness thus usually meant an outward expression of an inner faith, and was largely restricted to an outward adherence to the law of God. Occasionally, however, there is revealed a more subjective element in his thought, and holiness becomes a characteristic growing out of a personal relationship with God, rather than an obedience to His law.[64]

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[62] Ibid., p. 181; cf. Horatius Bonar, The True Heart, p. 121f.

[63] The Everlasting Righteousness, op. cit., p. 202; cf. Horatius Bonar, The Sin of our Holy Things Borne by Christ, p. 40f.

[64] See The Way of Holiness, op. cit., pp. 174-197.

The life of the justified is to be fruitful with good works, and should be peaceful, holy, loving, earnest, generous, lofty, and useful.[65] Although we can never expect to attain perfection on earth, according to Bonar, our standard must be perfection and our model the Perfect One.[66]

For the unrepentant sinner who neglects Christ's offer of pardon awaits the doom of eternal punishment. Bonar accepted without reservation the doctrine that at death every soul passes into an eternity of weal or woe. "And as man trifles with sin, so he conceives that God will trifle with it, and overlook it. That which is such a small things in his own eyes, he reasons, cannot be a great thing in God's. Hence the common idea of Divine mercy is simply that of indifference to sin. Man heeds it not save when personally affected by it, and God, he supposes, must heed it as little. God's hatred of sin, His purpose of taking vengeance upon the sinner, His profound displeasure against even one transgression, and His oft-written determination to punish sin eternally, is explained away, or supposed to be a transient feeling, easily altered, and quickly passing off. 'The soul that sinneth it shall die,' is not realized, but is either diluted into a mere temporary infliction, or made void as an uncertainty. It is not denied to be a Divine declaration; but it is not recognised as an absolute sentence, carrying with it an infinite certainty of

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[65] See The Everlasting Righteousness, op. cit., pp. 194-211; cf. Horatius Bonar, Service and the Strength for it, pp. 1-64.

[66] The Everlasting Righteousness, op. cit., p. 196f.

execution."[67] The dread of eternal punishment was utilized by Bonar as a powerful instrument for the conversion of souls. Giving practical application to the creed of theological utilitarianism which flourished almost universally throughout the eighteenth century,[68] he constantly emphasized in his writings the heinousness of sin in God's eyes and made the most of Christ's words about future retribution. This was always balanced by a fervent presentation of Christ as the sinner's only hope, and a plea to escape the wrath to come. A typical example of such use will be found in the following quotation from one of his Kelso Tracts, the substance of a sermon preached to Sunday School children on September 13, 1840:

> You must have the blood-washed robes! And yet I fear there are few of you have them, - very few among all the hundreds that are now before me. If you forget God, if you do not love Christ, if you lie, or cheat, or swear, or steal, or are passionate, or break the Sabbath-day by being idle, or by walking, or by staying at home when you ought to be at church, - then you may be quite sure that you have not yet had your robes washed white. You have still the old heart, the filthy soul. You are still the devil's children, and still wearing the devil's clothes. And if so, you cannot get to heaven as you are. Oh, how sad, how awful is the state of those children whose sins have never been forgiven, whose souls have never been washed clean in the blood of Jesus! The door of heaven is shut against them. Hell is ready to receive them for ever! . . . Are you ready to die to-night, and to lie down in the grave as calmly as you would do in your bed? Have you the blood-washed robes? Are your sins all forgiven?

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[67] Man: His Religion and His World, op. cit., p. 23f.

[68] See Storr, op. cit., p. 74.

> Has the Holy Spirit taken old things away and made all things new? Oh, I beseech you, do not delay! Thousands are now weeping in hell because they put off these things for another night. Do not rise from these seats till you have gone to Jesus for the precious gift. The soul that lies down in a Christless bed, may next day be carried to a Christless grave. Christ said to the saints in the church of Sardis, 'they shall walk with me in white.' Oh, then, come now to Him and you too shall walk with him in white. You shall stand upon the sea of glass. You shall have palms in your hands, and crowns upon your heads, and shall enter in with Christ through the gates of pearl, unto the glorious city, to be kings and priests to God, and to reign with Him for ever![69]

Bonar's diagnosis of the disease with which man is afflicted, the nature of the remedy which has been provided for his restoration, and the penalty for his refusal, have been briefly observed. The question that follows is: What is the extent of his remedy? In his earlier years Scotland had witnessed several forces at work against the traditional Calvinism of the church. The views of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen and John McLeod Campbell, the leaders of the new movement, had made the question of the universality of Christian salvation a live issue in the church. Campbell believed that the atonement was for all men, thereby placing himself in apparent contradiction to the Westminster Confession with its doctrine of Election. "I hold," he said at his trial in 1831, "the doctrine of Universal Atonement to be the doctrine of Scripture. . . I hold and teach that Christ died for all men. . . that those for whom He gave Himself unto God for a

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[69] Horatius Bonar, "The White Robes," No. 12, Kelso Tracts, p. 7f.

sweet-smelling savour were the children of men without exception and without distinction."[70] Bonar had very definite convictions on the subject which he frequently expounded in his writings and from his pulpit. By the universality of Christian salvation he meant that the offer of the gospel should be made to all men. "We tell men that there is such a thing as love in God towards the sinful; that this love hath found vent to itself in a righteous way, and that to the participation and enjoyment of this love ALL are welcome. These tidings are free: truly, absolutely, unconditionally free. They tell us that not only is there grace in God for sinners, but also that that grace has found vent to itself, and is flowing down in a righteous channel to unrighteous men. They tell us that the veil is rent from top to bottom, and that every sinner may go freely in. They tell us that there is forgiving love in the bosom of the Father, of which every sinner, without exception, is invited to avail himself."[71] This exhibition of the free gospel was evidently new and fresh to Bonar's Kelso congregation. The Rev. James Johnston writes of his early ministry at Kelso: "Even good men looked on the freeness of the Gospel offer from the midst of the Free North Church as positive heresy, and some orthodox ecclesiastics talked of prosecutions."[72]

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[70] Campbell, op. cit., p. 190.

[71] Truth and Error, op. cit., p. 116f.

[72] Jubilee, p. 37.

They need not have been alarmed, however, for this emphasis upon the freeness of the gospel offer was carefully balanced in Bonar's view by the doctrine of God's absolute predestination and election. The presentation of salvation was universal, but the actual bestowment was special.[73] As to the question of why God saves some and not all, Bonar, as Calvin, answered that such was "the good pleasure of His will."[74] Beyond that he would not go. Intellectually he accepted both doctrines, finding his grounds of belief in the Scriptures: "If I am asked, how can you preach a free Gospel, and yet believe in election? I answer - I believe in both, and preach both, because I find both in the Bible. I have no authority for preaching an unconditional Gospel but what I find in the Bible; and I have the same authority for preaching an unconditional personal election. God has told me that both are true; and woe be to me if I attempt to mutilate either one or the other."[75] Practically, however, he preferred a much stronger light being placed on the universal aspect of the Christian gospel.

A final cardinal feature of Bonar's doctrinal position was his belief in the Pre-millennial Advent of Christ. Although this doctrine was a part of the traditional faith of the church, it had not been emphasized in Scotland for over a century. The influence of Edward Irving was directly responsible for reviving

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[73] Truth and Error, op. cit., p. 132.

[74] Ibid., p. 51. [75] Ibid., p. 6f.

its interest for Bonar and his contemporaries. From the time that he accepted this mode of prophetic interpretation as taught by Irving, he clung to it as an essential element of his faith. He was ever ready to defend his views in such writings as his Prophetical Landmarks, his Coming and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Journal of Prophecy, which he edited for twenty-five years. His opinions on the doctrine were to him as much a matter of personal and tenacious conviction in 1879 as in 1828. At the Prophetical Conference at Mildmay in March 1879, he said: "I feel greatly more certain as to the Second Coming of the Lord being His Church's true hope; that is the first thing. I feel greatly more certain, as the years roll on, regarding the Pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I feel greatly more certain concerning the First Resurrection and the Millennial Reign of Christ. Regarding these things which I have thus briefly enumerated, and on which I should have liked to dwell at length, I feel the power of a demonstration - they form to me a demonstrated creed."[76]

The call to prophetic study came for Bonar from the condition of the world. In his eyes all creation was in ruin, the whole world was in wickedness, the church was rent and feeble, and "like a spectre from the abyss"[77] the Antichrist and the hosts of darkness were gathering strength and rising to overshadow the earth. In such a world prophecy is our only guide.

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[76] Memorial, p. 100f.

[77] Horatius Bonar, Prophetical Landmarks, p. 6.

The duty of every Christian and the church in such an hour of darkness is to "give far more earnest heed to the one guiding lamp of Scripture; and, watching the parallel progress of event and prophecy, to mark the signs of the times, that she may be able to tell each inquirer, 'What of the night?'"[78] "We are fallen upon evil days and perilous times. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many is chilled. And shall not this awaken us to watchfulness? Shall it not lead us to trim our lamps and gird up our loins? The storms that during the last half century have burst over the nations, wrecking the goodly fabrics of the olden time, have left us but a few remaining fragments; and as we stray along the shore in this dull evening of time, marking their decaying remnants, we are filled with foreboding doubts of the future; and seeing the heaven still clouded, we cannot help believing that the storm is still unspent. Woe be to us, if it overtake us unawares, and encompass us in a moment with its fury, unsheltered and unprepared!"[79]

The key-note of his prophetic teaching was the imminence of the Lord's Coming. The chief purpose of God from the very beginning was self-manifestation.[80] This purpose develops itself chiefly in connection with two great events, the First and Second Advents of Christ. "Round these two points all other events cluster. From these two foci all light is radiating, and round them all events revolve. It is only by keeping our

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[78] Ibid., p. 15.

[79] Ibid., p. 15.

[80] Ibid., p. 29f.

eye on these that we can understand the mighty scheme, and enter into the mind of God respecting it, giving to each event its proper place, order, connexion, and value."[81] The two Advents of Christ are thus the two periods around which God's self-manifestation is made to revolve. As all historic truth is connected with the Second. The interval between the two centers, the period in which we are now living, is called "the last days" and began with the First and will end with the Second Advent. It is essentially an era of grace in which God is presenting salvation to sinners through Christ. However, in spite of the gracious nature and design of the period, few will be saved, or rather elected to salvation by God. The entire world will not be converted before the second coming of Christ. Instead, the character of the interval will be evil and dark for Israel, the Church, and the world.[82] The object of the interval is manifold: to show how bad sin is, to show the nature and extent of human wickedness, to show Satanic power and wickedness, to bring out the gracious character of God, and to gather in a people to Christ. This interval of Antichristianity will gradually wax worse and worse as time moves on to its close: "During it, God's object seems to be, to allow human and Satanic wickedness to evolve and overflow to the uttermost. In former dispensations he tried many a check, but all failed; and now he has let loose creature lawlessness and evil, in order that, when it has reached its height, he may effectually

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[81] Ibid., p. 33f.

[82] Ibid., pp. 61-70.

interpose to arrest it, by sending his own Son into the world, to destroy Antichrist and to bind Satan. Then, under the righteous rule of Jesus and his Bride, shall holiness be established, iniquity swept away, and peace shed its vernal gladness over the long desolations of earth."[83]

With the supreme event of the Saviour's second return Bonar associated the restoration of Israel, the destruction of Anti-Christ, the first resurrection, the translation of the church, the marriage of the Lamb, and the inauguration of the millennial kingdom: "And then, what a change to this weary earth which has so long been groaning! What deliverance and joy! Christ upon the throne, Antichrist in the abyss, and Satan bound in chains! The saints exalted and glorified, the wicked trodden down and put to shame! The curse removed, Paradise restored, Israel gathered, the Gentiles converted, creation blessed, and Jehovah in the person of Immanuel, taking up his everlasting abode with the children of men.[84]

The signs of His coming are numerous and notable. Among the signs of the present age which seem most remarkable as forerunners of the Lord's appearing are: the maturity of the Papal Antichrist, the diffusion of infidelity, the increase of immorality, the prevalence of superficiality and formalism in religion, the strange and incongruous mixture of opinions in the world, dissociality, religious deceivers, wars and rumors

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[83] Ibid., p. 73f.

[84] Ibid., p. 352f.

of wars, earthquakes, pestilences, and famines in different places, the restlessness of the world, exertions in missionary efforts, the increasing prominence of Israel, efforts at self-regeneration, the spread of knowledge, and the disbelief of the approaching Advent even in the Church.[85] Thus the hour is at hand for Christ's return! It would be like the thrust of sudden lightning; in an altogether unexpected moment the earth would brighten beneath the Messiah's feet: "And how soon shall present night be forgotten in the brightness of the endless day! How quickly shall the curse give place to the blessing, barrenness be exchanged for fruitfulness, and all pollution be swept clean away! It is but 'a little while,' and all shall be well. Another'night's tossing on the billows, and then the calm of the eternal morn. One more outburst of the 'warring winds,' and then earth's storms are hushed, and the long dissonances of time melt into the one harmony of creation's boundless song!"[86]

This hope of Christ's return in the darkest hour of its need is the peculiar hope of the Church, and of those who call themselves Christians. In a letter to the Prophetical Conference at Mildmay in March 1886, to which he was unable to go, on account of illness, he wrote: "I know not but that this may be my last opportunity of bearing witness to the much-forgotten doctrine which was so specially given to the Church as her blessed hope, and I wish to say how increasingly

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[85] See Ibid., pp. 354-385.

[86] Ibid., p. 389.

important that doctrine seems to me to become as the ages are running to their close, and the power of the great adversary is unfolding itself both in the Church and in the World. 'Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.' The awful winding up may be nearer than we think. 'The harvest of the earth,' is ripe; and, as for 'the clusters of the vine of the earth,' are they not long since 'fully ripe'? and is it not the great long-suffering of God suspending the execution of wrath, long since overdue, that has stayed the vials of vengeance? The Patmos message of our great King and Lord is still sounding in the ear of the Church, 'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.' Shall she not speak loudly out her responsive, 'Amen! even so, come, Lord Jesus?'"[87]

C. Evaluation

The brief outline of Bonar's doctrinal position has not brought to light any new doctrine or any significant contribution to theological thought. There have been few unique distinctions, unusual adjustments, or fresh emphases; his theological thought substantially followed the ebb and flow of the general tradition of Scottish Calvinism, and in particular the "frozen orthodoxy"[88] of the Scottish school of Evangelicalism of his own day. It is quite obvious that

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[87] Memorial, p. 102.

[88] Alexander Campbell Fraser, Biographia Philosophica, p. 63.

there are certain limitations in his doctrinal position, when looked at from the vantage point of the broader and more liberal modes of present-day thought. Few Christians of today would agree with his theory of the authority of the Bible, or his emphasis on Soteriology to the exclusion of a wider view of the Christian revelation. They would not follow him in his insistence upon the total depravity of human nature, eternal punishment for sins, or the imminent Second Coming of Christ. It would be difficult to sympathize with his religious individualism with its lack of recognition of the corporate life of religion and the value of membership in an organized society. Religion is seen today as a conscious personal relation with God, who is the Father of all His children, rather than a system of doctrine. It finds its appeal in the "intrinsic excellence and beauty of holiness and love,"[89] rather than in a type of commercial transaction which balanced the importance of eternal and temporal interests, and found its impulse to the Christian life in rewards and penalties, eternal bliss and eternal loss. A thorough criticism of his thought, however, would involve an analysis of the whole system of the Calvinist and Evangelical traditions. This is not expedient for this study. It must suffice to say that his limitations were common to the age and the tradition of which he was a leading exponent. Admired by many as a writer of "practical

[89] Statement by McLeod Campbell in Campbell, op. cit., p. 190.

theology" during his lifetime, his many books and reputation did not long outlive his death. Even the response accorded his earlier authorship far surpassed the use of his later writings. His theological writings made no impact on the theological thought of his time, and his name is almost never mentioned by any writer dealing with the development of theology in Scotland.

Nevertheless, this is not to deny Bonar a definite significance in the history of Scottish theology. Though his writings made no lasting impression and contributed no new thought, he made a real contribution to the theological atmosphere of his day, and by his example and through his writings, has no doubt affected the religious life of Scotland during the past century. He was primarily an evangelist with a practical aim -- to teach spiritual religion to the people. While he insisted on a clearly defined dogmatic basis of belief, he wrote to save souls and doctrine was always utilized to this end. Filled with all the fire of a prophet, he asserted his views as stoutly as they were tenaciously held. While the substance of his writings deviated little from what others of his day had written, his power lay in bringing doctrinal truth home to the heart and conscience of his readers. He kindled their emotions, and drove his appeal home in simple language which they could understand. It may well be said of him as was said of his teacher Thomas Chalmers, "he wrote with

the sound of the world in his ears; every one of his books seems anchored to earth."[90] As a result his writings mediated his convictions to many thousands of Christians in his day whose theology had been stagnant and whose faith had been dormant.

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90 Peter Bayne, Six Christian Biographies, p. 167.

CHAPTER IV

PREACHER

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Introduction

In no country has the pulpit of the Reformed Church left a more glorious heritage than in Scotland. Sometimes, as in the preaching of all Protestant communions, it has been characterized by narrowness of view, crudeness and provincialism of thought, rudeness of tone and temper, stiff and formal methods. Generally, however, it has been an aggressive, militant pulpit which has in its own way supported a distinctively educative and edifying type of preaching. Blaikie says of its influence in Scotland: "All along it has been one of the factors of her history, one of the leading sources both of civil and spiritual influence. In days of struggle a free pulpit was contended for as for dear life. A ministry free to utter the message of Christ was indispensable, and if it could not be enjoyed under the arches of the cathedral or the roof of the parish church, it must be sought in conventicles and chapels, or even among the mountains and moorlands, with sentinels all round to give warning of the dragoons. The efforts

and sacrifices needed to maintain it developed and exercised the spirit of independence, and were leading means of securing both the civil and the spiritual liberties of the country."[1] Nor is its influence merely a tradition of the past. Its power upon the character and life of the people, as well as its own intrinsic excellence, continues to make the Scottish pulpit one of the marked features of the Scottish Church in the present day.

A. Bonar The Preacher

Horatius Bonar was a worthy successor of this heritage. The ministry of the truth of God was the life work to which he felt God had called him, and the work of the ministry was the one great absorbing interest of his life. He took a high view of his sacred calling. His lofty conception of his office is reflected in the words spoken to the Free Church General Assembly in 1883, the year in which he served as Moderator: "All the honours and responsibilities of earthly greatness are not worthy to be compared with those of the shepherd of the poorest flock in the remotest of our Scottish uplands. For we are fellow-workers with God, ambassadors for Christ, ministers of the great peace-making, stewards of the mysteries of God, guides to the One Cross, heralds of the one salvation and the one Saviour."[2]

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[1] Blaikie, op. cit., p. 1.

[2] Our Ministry, op. cit., p. 83.

Bonar felt that ministers should be distinguished from all others by the nobility of their character and the usefulness of their lives. They were to champion the cause of God under all circumstances and against all persons. "We are to be men of God, out and out," he states, "so that the world shall not mistake us, nor the Church of God be ashamed of us, nor our own consciences rebuke us for inconsistency. To be thoroughly in earnest; to live above the world, and leave not only its sins but its frivolities behind us is the first part of our calling. Even this, however, is not our terminus. To make our lives an example to all around; to give forth no uncertain sound from our trumpets; to throw ourselves into the very heart of human evil for the deliverance of our fellow-men; to exercise the true vigilance of the shepherd in the presence of the great adversary, now more than ever formidable and personal, when disbelief of his very existence is everywhere; these are some of the duties which our responsibilities press home upon us."[3]

Among the minister's many responsibilities, Bonar felt that preaching the reconciling gospel of Christ was the primary task. He warned other ministers against the time-consuming activities that took them from their main work: "The danger for ourselves in this day of energy and bustle is that of busying ourselves with a multitude of matters, not always in themselves unimportant, but which are after all considerably external, and

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[3] Ibid., p. 69.

which vanish into nothing when set side by side with the true ministerial work of seeking the lost and building up the saved."[4] He thought of himself as first and foremost a preacher of the Word of God. Throughout his long ministry he gave his best energies and thought to his preaching. His serious attitude toward his mission and message, with its consequent earnestness in the pulpit, drew many to him and was a characteristic mark of his ministry. "His ministry was one of intense reality;", writes the Rev. R. H. Lundie, "none could fail to see that he was in earnest. It was the passion of his life to win souls, and largely did God grant his desires."[5]

Bonar's remarkable love of preaching lasted all his life. For the greater part of fifty years he preached two sermons every Sunday and held a weekly prayer meeting. Amid the steady demands of his pulpit and pastoral duties in his own congregation, he found time to accept innumerable preaching engagements from far and near. At prophetical conferences, evangelistic meetings, Moody's great gatherings, or speaking to a small group in a cottage or farm house around Kelso, his voice was never silent. He was a favorite with the evangelical section of the Church of England and with many English nonconformist congregations. In Scotland he annually preached at the churches of his two brothers during the Communion seasons, and was in great demand for evangelistic services. Principal

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[4] Ibid., p. 72f.

[5] Memorial, p. 12.

John Cairns said of his services in this field: ". . . I regard Dr. Bonar's work as an evangelist as one who had the very soul of an evangelist, as one that you could not meet and work along with without feeling that he was a true evangelist, one who felt that the Gospel was a Gospel for the world, and who would give life and labour, and all that he could part with in order to see men saved."[6] He crossed the English channel fourteen times, and took a prominent part in founding the McAll Mission to the working men of France. His monthly children's services in Kelso and Edinburgh were packed with children who came to hear him. He was one of the few regular ministers of congregations who habitually preached in the open air, not only on week-day evenings, but often on Sunday evenings after having twice officiated in his own pulpit. He carried on these many preaching activities until within a short period of his last illness, often entering the pulpit under the strain of fatigue. "He came to the pulpit often when he was hardly able to undertake pulpit duty," notes one writer, "but as soon as he found himself in the place where he was wont to speak to his people, he seemed to become animated by their presence and to gather earnestness from the very attention which was always in a remarkable degree given to him while he spoke."[7] Even in his retirement he continued to issue monthly messages to be read to his congregation. The Rev. Thomas Brown writes of his

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[6] Jubilee, p. 23.

[7] The Scotsman, August 1, 1889, op. cit., p. 5.

ceaseless, long-continued preaching activities: "At Kelso men saw him in the first fervour of his opening ministry. At Edinburgh he was as fervid still: age had not chilled the ardour of his first love; it only added to the affectionate reverence with which men looked up to him and hung on his lips. . . . He loved his work, and was glad to spend and be spent for Christ."[8]

Bonar was richly endowed for the work to which he gave himself. He possessed a commanding and striking appearance, and was an impressive figure to look upon in the pulpit. A visitor to his church in Edinburgh about 1876 gave this impression of him: "The striking feature of his face is the large, soft, dark eye, the power of which one feels across the church. There are no bold, rugged lines in his face; but benevolence, peace and sweetness pervade it. . . . His power over his audience was complete. Even the children looked steadily in his face; once he paused in his discourse and addressed himself especially to the Sunday-school children who sat by themselves on one side of the pulpit. I was sure the little ones never heard the Good Shepherd's call more tenderly given. With one of the most winning faces I ever saw he closed: 'Whosoever - that includes you - whosoever will - does that include you?'"[9] Coupled with this fine appearance was a deep-toned, sonorous voice. Usually he had a grave delivery with a slow and solemn enunciation and a

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[8] Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 330.

[9] Samuel Willoughby Duffield, English Hymns: Their Authors and History, p. 169.

low, quiet, impressive voice. Sometimes, however, it could be turned in an instant to a terrible denunciation of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, or to a tender and winsome presentation of grace and pardon to the sinner. "Often our blood ran cold under the thrilling words," writes the Rev. James Johnston, "I can remember now, one night when in his impassioned action, Dr. Bonar's arm struck the gas bracket and the globe fell with a crash on the floor, so intense was the state of tension of the hearers, that men started from their seats and women gave a suppressed scream. Pausing for a moment, the preacher said with a solemnity which made a deep impression, 'You start at the falling glass, what would you do if you heard the blast of the Archangel's trumpet?'"[10]

Along with this physical endowment, Bonar had strong intellectual powers. The preparation for his life's work had begun early in life. His student days were marked by a seriousness found in few so young. He was thoroughly grounded in the classics and possessed an amazing knowledge of Scripture. His was a phenomenal memory, and he had a wealth of poetry, prose, hymns, and Scripture at his command which he could quote freely and at great length. Although his sermons were carefully prepared and written out in full, he spoke entirely from memory and without notes of any kind.[11] In addition, his mind was finely disciplined by long hours of study. Rarely was he seen without

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[10] Jubilee, p. 37f.

[11] See The Scotsman, August 1, 1889, op. cit., p. 5.

a book in his hand, and he possessed thousands of volumes in his library. Throughout his life he maintained habits of industry and diligence which he had established in the early years of his ministry. His faithfulness and unremitting efforts of study are reflected in all his extant sermons.[12]

The real source of his preaching power cannot fully be understood, however, unless he is seen for what he was - a deeply spiritual man. In an address to theological students he once said: "If you would be successful you must be much with God."[13] It was certainly true of his own life. His sermons, hymns, and books all reveal that he was a man of prayer. It was his constant practice to spend several hours a day in prayer, meditation or Bible study. One of his children wrote of him: "Among my earliest remembrances as a child is that of awe-struck listening to the voice of prayer coming from the locked study, where he knelt, or paced up and down, sometimes for hours. A young servant in our house owed her conversion to this. She

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[12] It must be borne in mind in reading this chapter that there are only a few of Bonar's sermons extant. Outside of fifty-two short sermons written for family reading, there are only fifteen sermons in print. Fortunately these include his first and last sermons, a funeral sermon, a religious lecture, a special sermon preached for the Religious Tract Society, plus ten sermons preached in 1853, 1854, and 1855, a time that may be considered as the height of his preaching power, at the Ranelagh Presbyterian Church, Chelsea, and the Presbyterian Church, Caledonian Road, Islington, London. These are fairly representative of his preaching and must serve as the basis of any present evaluation of Bonar as a preacher. In addition, there are a number of unclassified, and in many cases illegible, sermon manuscripts in the New College Library and the National Library of Scotland. For an example of these, see Appendix.

[13] Horatius Bonar, "Address to Theological Students," Unclassified Manuscript, New College Library.

thought: 'If he needs to pray so much, what will become of me if I do not pray?'"[14] This devotional quality of his life is especially reflected in his sermons, and no doubt caused Lord Polwarth to say at Bonar's Centenary Celebrations: "I have asked myself, and I now ask you to think, what made Dr. Bonar what he was. First and foremost he had planted his feet on the Rock, Christ. There is the beginning of all Christian life, of all Christian ministry, and of all great service. That rock was Christ. Dr. Bonar's whole life and teaching were in one respect peculiar and remarkable. There was nothing of self in his preaching; it was always Christ."[15]

B. The Preacher And His Message

The inaugural sermon of a minister in a new charge is traditionally regarded in the Scottish Church as a standard by which to judge and a specimen of what may be expected during the course of his future labors. He is expected in that discourse to strike the key-note of his subsequent preaching and ministry. In the first sentence of Bonar's first sermon to his first congregation, there is a summary of his message and his attitude toward preaching the Word of God. "My dear brethren," he said, "I do not come to address you after the manner of man's wisdom, nor with words of human eloquence, but to speak to your

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[14] Memorial, p. 15.

[15] Memories, p. 29.

souls of the things which concern your eternity; - to stir you up to seek in good earnest salvation for yourselves and for others."[16] All of Bonar's preaching, whether as a youth in Kelso or as an aged prophet in Edinburgh, revolved around this great theme. The one purpose of all his sermons was to win men to Christ. "Dr. Bonar is terribly in earnest,"[17] said one who worked with him, and it was so. "Men felt that he had entered the pulpit with a resolute purpose," states the Rev. Thomas Brown, "he was there to win their souls for Christ, and for nothing else."[18]

Despite the ascendency of evangelical preaching during the early years of Bonar's ministry, many ministers were cold, indifferent, philosophical, and even lazy in their preaching. Religion to him, however, was not only a matter of the intellect and will, it was also a matter of the heart and feelings. He believed with his teacher, Thomas Chalmers, that: "Moonlight preaching ripens no harvest!"[19] In his preaching he drew a clear line between the saved and the unsaved with no middle ground between, but balanced his harsh denunciations with the offer of free and immediate salvation, simply upon the acceptance of Christ by the individual sinner. When Bonar came with this message of urgent salvation, it was regarded as something new and startling. "I can well remember the impression made by his preaching," says the Rev. James Johnston, "it came with

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[16] Kelso, p. 125.

[17] Bonar, p. 201.

[18] Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 329.

[19] Thomas Chalmers, as quoted by Adam Philip in Thomas Chalmers, p. 118.

all the freshness of a revelation."[20] Actually it was no new message, but the old evangelical one preached in a new light and with new zeal. "In the truth set forth there was nothing peculiar," writes Hew Scott, "except the amazing simplicity and power with which he was enabled to set forth the completeness of man's ruin, as utterly lost, met by the completeness of Christ's finished work for securing free and immediate salvation for the chief of sinners."[21] "Such preaching had a two-fold effect," notes the Rev. Thomas Brown, "it attracted and it repelled. Some did not relish the peculiar form in which religious truth was presented; some could not bear the pressure of his searching appeals; others felt that this was the kind of preaching which above all things they needed."[22] But if some were repelled by his message, the Gospel came alive for a great many more. People flocked to hear a message so simple and yet so dynamic, so inclusive and yet so personal.

It was not the mere cry "Believe" or "Come," however, that caused people to crowd his services, for his preaching was always on some vital aspect of Christian truth with Christ himself as the object of faith. The substance of his preaching were those truths which ruled his life, and which have already been observed in the previous chapter. No doctrine in the whole evangelical system was omitted or overlooked. The evangelical note is positive and strong throughout his

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[20] Jubilee, p. 37.

[21] Hew Scott, op. cit., p. 43.

[22] Thomas Brown, op. cit., p. 329.

sermons, with no variation from the traditional standards of orthodoxy of the Scottish Church.

Several recurrent themes stand out from the others, however, and give tone and character to all his sermons. One of these is his pessimistic and melancholy view of the world in which he lived. In his eyes there was not only widespread wickedness and unbelief, but atheism, profanity, and ungodliness everywhere. Such was the extent of sin in the world, that these were certainly the last days before the judgement of God fell upon it. From his earliest sermon until his last there is constant bemoaning of the sad state of affairs in the world. In his first sermon at Kelso he says: "Now, as the irreligion of our day is of much deeper root and stronger texture than that of former times, so must the means for removing it be more vigorous and decisive. Whatever might have formerly availed for effecting the cure, nothing now will be of service but the strongest measures. The disease is more malignant; the obstacles to be overcome are greater than ever; for 'in the last days perilous times shall come:' 'little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists whereby we know that it is the last time.'"[23] And in his last sermon in Edinburgh he states: "Men are willing enough to receive the conjectures, philosophies, and sentiments of human device; but a message

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23 Kelso, p. 131.

directly from the lips of Him who made them, and who shall be their judge, they will not receive. This is the world's condemnation. The present is a lying age: the philosophy of this age is lying; the literature of this age is lying. This age will receive anything that professes to be truth, except what comes from God."[24] He warns Christians about participating in all sorts of "social" sins, against which he frequently spoke out in his sermons. "Now, there are amusements that are harmless; but are these in the theatre or opera? There is gaiety that is innocent; but is this to be found in the ballroom, and in the giddy whirl of the waltz? There are sports which are healthful; but are these on the turf or in the ring? There are feasts of the intellect; but are these contained only in the light novel or the loose song? Are they to be found in the lecture-rooms of those who cleverly substitute philosophy for faith, reason for revelation, man's wisdom for God's?"[25] No one in his view could be a Christian and love the things of this world. Either we are of Christ or we are of the world, there could be no compromise between the two. "Love not the world! for if we love this world we cannot love the world to come; if we love the world, we cannot love the Father; if we love the world, we cannot seek the things above. The friendship of the world is enmity with God, and therefore companionship with the things of the world cannot fail to hinder us from setting our affection on

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[24] Memorial, p. 82.

[25] Horatius Bonar, Family Sermons, p. 400f.

the things above. There must be no compromise, no lingering, no half-heartedness. All must be decided; for what can be more expressive of decision and unwavering consistency than the idea of our being actually risen men! This sets aside all vain excuses, all idle pleas for mingling with the world. Either you are risen, or you are not risen. If you are not risen, then, of course, there can be no appeal of this kind to the conscience at all. Go on in your worldliness; fling yourselves headlong into the torrent of earth's vanities; but know that the end of these things is death! But if you are risen, then there is an end of all debate. The point is settled. You cannot take part with the world in its follies, and gaieties, and sins! What, risen with Christ and yet a worldling! Impossible. Risen with Christ, yet singing its idle songs, hurrying through its mazy dance, partaking in its mirth and revelry! Impossible. If you be risen with Christ there is no alternative; you must seek the things above."[26] The true Christian must constantly be on guard against the world and its snares. "We must be watchful against the world. It may tempt us, - let us be upon our guard ready to detect its snares in whatever shape or guise they may be presented; meeting all those temptations with arguments such as these: 'What have I, who have put on Christ, to do with a world that lieth in wickedness? What have I, who have put on Christ, to do with the world's gaieties and vain pursuits? What have I, who have put on Christ, to do with anything, save that in which

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[26] Ibid., p. 198.

Christ himself delights?"[27] It was not only the "social" sins which raised his wrath. The occasions of his greatest rebukes were the "spiritual" sins of his day. These included his constant attack on Romanism, for the most part on the doctrinal level, and what he considered heresy and error in his own church. In speaking of the Incarnation of Christ he attacks the error of Rome in connection with it: "Here lies one of the crowning sins of Rome. She has degraded the Son of God, and has done what she could to nullify the great objects of incarnation, as well as the great end of blood-shedding. She has exalted the human above the divine; she has seated a woman upon the throne of God; she has made the glory of the incarnation to centre in Mary, not in Mary's son; she has made, not Christ, but Mary, the wisdom of God; not Christ, but Mary, the power of God; not Christ, but Mary, the link between the earthly and the heavenly; not Christ, but Mary, the point of union between the human and the divine!"[28] But he took a more serious view of strange opinions, new doctrines, or any departure from the old ways of thinking in his own church. Speaking of the delusive spirit abroad in the church, he says: "And then in the adoption of evolution as an 'ascertained' law both in science and religion; in the substitution of intuition for induction, and hypothesis for fact in Biblical investigation; in the preference of the conjectural to the historical in the problems of criticism; in the elevation

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[27] Horatius Bonar, "The Church in Sardis," p. 129.

[28] Family Sermons, op. cit., p. 43f.

of minor points above the major, and the depression of the doctrinal below the sensational; in the depreciation and irreverent handling of the one great Book; in the dissemination of vague theories of inspiration and unsettling views of our whole sacred literature among the youth of our Church; in all these we read warnings of what may at any moment burst upon us; more especially as the destructive, not the constructive or pacific, spirit is in the ascendant, and men seem resolved to pursue every favourite idea, not to say every crotchet, to the bitter end."[29]

Closely connected with this feature of his message was his assertion of the sinfulness of man. It was not merely homiletic appendage, for almost every sermon stresses this conviction. Man's sin was no superficial blemish, but a malignant and total pollution of the body. He had reached the very nadir of depravity. No remedy which did not take into consideration the total depravity of man could cure him. "The evil does not lie merely in the leaves and branches of the tree, but in the stem and root; the sap is tainted, and unless that is healed, all efforts at improvement are vain. Our whole life must be treated as utterly evil, our spiritual life-blood as thoroughly corrupted; and no remedy can be of any use save that which goes to the very source."[30] He took a stern view of the gravity of sin. "Count no sin trivial," he says, "either

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[29] Our Ministry, op. cit., p. 20f.

[30] Family Sermons, op. cit., p. 316.

in yourself or another. Do not dally with temptation. Do not extenuate guilt. Do not say, May I not keep my beloved sin a little longer? Part with it, or it will cost you dear. In what way it may do so I know not; but I can say this, that sooner or later it will cost you dear, both in soul and body."[31] Only as the sinner realized his true condition could the eye of faith be opened to the radical action of the Cross. For those that did not turn to Christ awaited death and eternal punishment for their sins. "The ways from which he calls on them to turn are named by him 'evil ways;' and what he calls evil must be truly so, - hateful in his eyes, as well as ruinous to the soul. The end of these ways he pronounces to be death; so that sinners must either turn or die. It is the broad way which leadeth down to death on which they are walking, and there is no hope of escaping unless they retrace their steps. As certainly as their bodies shall return to dust, so certainly shall their souls have their portion in the second death, and their dwelling-place in the eternal tomb of the fiery lake; where, instead of the worm of earth preying upon their lifeless flesh, there shall be the worm that never dies, gnawing their spirits, and making them feel that all that has hitherto been known of death on earth, - its pangs, its throes, its horrors, its separations, - has been but a type of what is coming, and that the reality contained in that word DEATH had never before been imagined, - nor, indeed, can be, - till the Judge's sentence has cut them off from God

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[31] Ibid., p. 346.

for ever, and flung around them the darkness of the endless midnight; till hell has closed its gate upon them, and made damnation sure!"[32]

Another element of Bonar's message was his stress upon the freeness of the Gospel offer. When he began his ministry in Kelso his congregation were unaccustomed to such emphasis being placed on the doctrine, and some regarded it as heretical teaching. "Even good men looked on the freeness of the Gospel offer from the midst of the Free North Church as positive heresy," says the Rev. James Johnston, "and some orthodox ecclesiastics talked of prosecutions."[33] Nevertheless, Bonar clung to his opinion, and the doctrine retained its prominent place in his preaching. In this illustration there is a typical example of its use in his sermons: "We testify of this free love to a heedless world; and if there be here some heedless man of earth, let him listen to our testimony to-night respecting this free love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the free love of him who was delivered for our offences and rose again for our justification; and it is the free love of him who is ere long coming as the avenging Judge, to smite the nations with his iron rod, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This free love of Christ wraps up eternal life within it; and in receiving God's testimony concerning that love, we receive the life that it contains. This free love wraps up all pardon in it, and in receiving God's testimony of the love, we receive the pardon it contains. It

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[32] Ibid., p. 326f.

[33] Jubilee, p. 37.

is the free love which has been revealed to us in the cross of him who died. It is the free love of him who speaks to us in this last book of Scripture from heaven, and says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me.' Oh! men of earth, think what the reception of this free love would do for you."[34]

Still another feature of his message was Bonar's emphasis on the Cross. His sermons were simply saturated with the message of Calvary. It is in the Cross of Christ that he sees the divine proclamation and interpretation of the things of God. The Cross is the key to His character, His word, His purpose, and the clue to the world's and the Church's history. Above all, it is there that sinful man learns of God's forgiveness of sin. "And where is it that we get the exposition of God's character from which we learn that there is this forgiveness which is necessary to the production of true fear? We get it in the cross of his Son: not in his Incarnation merely; that was but a step to the cross; it is in the cross, in the blood, in the death and grave of Christ, that we read forgiveness. It is the cross of Christ that is the expression of God's character; it is in and through this that we find forgiveness proclaimed."[35] Christ's whole purpose in coming into the world was to suffer on the Cross and thus reveal to a sinful world the mind and heart

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[34] Horatius Bonar, "The Second Coming of Christ," p. 543.

[35] Horatius Bonar, "The Fear of the Lord and its Results," p. 132.

of God. "You see in this Godman, the Sinbearer, 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' You see in him one clothed and furnished thus, as I have described him, but clothed and furnished for the very purpose of being a fitting and sufficient sacrifice; the propitiation for our sins. We see in him one who can take our very place, one who can stand where we should have stood before God, one who can bear what we should have borne, one who can endure what we should have endured. We find in him one who can not only obey the law for us, but who can endure the law's penalty to the very utmost even to the giving up of his own life, the shedding of his own blood for us. We see in him one not merely whose life, and whose death is for us; we see in him one in whom there is a fulness that exactly meets our case - a fulness containing all we need for pardon and for life, and for strength, and for healing, and for blessing."[36]

Bonar's proclamation of Christ's Second Coming forms another distinctive high-light in his preaching. Through every sermon there runs the unmistakable and unrelenting refrain that man's existence is inescapably bound up with the events accompanying Christ's Second Advent and the ensuing "day of judgment." The crucial concern of the Christian should be readiness for His Coming, and Bonar's use of the doctrine in preaching is usually introduced as a fervid warning. "It is long-suffering alone that delays his coming. Long-suffering towards an impenitent world. Long-suffering that makes him so unwilling to

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[36] Horatius Bonar, "Looking Unto Jesus," p. 139.

smite, so desirous to prolong to the very uttermost the acceptable year of the Lord. It is this long-suffering, brethren, that we proclaim to you in these last days. The Lord is long-suffering even in the midst of provocation, and rebelliousness, and unbelief. His patience is not easily worn out. He bears long with the sinner. But delay cannot always go on. It has been long enough already, and his arrival may be very near. He cannot be far off now. Realize his nearness, brethren; ye who are his, gird up your loins, trim your lamps, see that your vessels be filled with oil. Think of his nearness, sinners, and tremble lest that day overtake you unawares."[37]

The chief characteristic of his message, however, was his strange solemnity with its evangelic fervor of warning and pleading. Almost every sermon makes a last solemn warning of the everlasting punishment in store for the unconverted sinner, and urges him with great winsomeness and tender words to accept Christ before it is too late. It was not directed to the congregation in any objective, general, or impersonal manner, but was conspicuously and emphatically personal. A typical example of this characteristic of his preaching will be found in his sermon, "The Past and The Future." After speaking of the various aspects and rewards of faith and our need of it, he forcefully concludes: "But what of the sinner? what of the man of unbelief? what is before him? the eternal darkness, the weeping, the wailing, the gnashing of teeth. Oh, man of

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[37] "The Second Coming of Christ," op. cit., p. 540.

earth, oh, man of unbelief, thou who hast never yet separated from the world, nor broken with its company, nor unloosed one single tie that binds thee to this Egypt, for thee there is no brightness in all the prospect that lies before thee, no glory in thy future, no city, no heritage, no Canaan, no Jerusalem, no paradise, no love, no gladness - but lamentation and mourning, and woe, weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, the blackness of darkness for ever! That is thy portion, oh, man of earth, oh, man of unbelief, thou that art still in love with this perishing world, whose portion is yet this sinful earth! Think what lies before thee! Think what a day may usher thee into! Think what a doom thou art preparing for thyself! Only tarry not, for judgment is coming; tarry not, for the days of darkness are at hand, and we are entering the gloomy shadow of that dark thunder cloud that is ere long to burst in desolating tempests on the world. How, oh, man of earth, how, oh, unrepenting sinner, wilt thou abide that storm? How wilt thou endure the bursting of the world's last thunderstorm, in the great day of the Lord? Tarry not, for 'in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh!'"[38] Rarely did Bonar close a service without pressing for a personal decision for Christ.

This quality of winsomeness in Bonar's preaching was not new with him. In the early days of his ministry he was intimately associated with the famed Scottish preacher, Robert Murray McCheyne, who had revived this element in his own preaching.

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38 Horatius Bonar, "The Past and the Future," p. 147f.

Bonar was a man of like spirit, and what Blaikie says of McCheyne could well apply to him: "A pity that turned many of his sermons into elegiac poems, thrilled his heart, and by the power of the Spirit imparted the thrill to many souls."[39] Despite the severity with which he emphasized the fact of man's guilt and the wrath of God, there is no doubt, as the Rev. George Wilson notes, that: "The Bonar message was often winsome with love, often sweet with peace, often patient with forbearance, often persuasive with sympathy, often cheering with hope, and often radiant with joy."[40]

C. The Preacher And His Method

The first essential of a sermon in Bonar's mind was a text. While the custom of selecting a portion of the Scriptures to be used as the basis for a sermon was almost universally observed in his day, no preacher could have more completely and consistently observed it than Bonar. God has spoken to man in the Bible, and the preacher's task was to interpret and expound what God had said. All of his sermons, therefore, began with a text which the sermon attempted to present in its full meaning and varied teachings. A typical example of such use will be found in his sermon on "The Peace of God," which had the following text: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." - John 14:27. After a short

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[39] Blaikie, op. cit., p. 295.

[40] Memories, p. 114f.

introduction Bonar says: "Three things in this passage call for our attention. First of all there is the legacy or relic - 'Peace I leave with you.' Secondly, there is the gift - 'My peace I leave with you.' Thirdly, there is the contrast between two kinds of peace, and two kinds or modes of giving - 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'"[41] There was nothing unusual in his choice of texts, and most of them are from the more familiar passages of the Bible. There is abundant variety in the texts chosen, however, indicating that he was equally at home in the Old and New Testaments. Primarily, though, he selected his texts from the New Testament, with particuliar preference for John, Romans, and the Revelation.

As was natural for an evangelical preacher of his day, Bonar was primarily concerned with preaching the facts and truths of the Christian faith, and some doctrinal emphasis was almost always the basis of his sermon. They are filled with the solid substance of doctrine and fired with the passion of the evangelist. While doctrine was his first love, he did not ignore matters which dealt with morality or the varied experiences of the Christian life. In fact, in his preaching the three were inevitably joined as complementary to one another. His subjects were generally the great central themes of Christianity: the majesty of God, the person and work of Christ, faith and hope, the promise of Christ's Second Coming. Among the typical titles are: "A Present Saviour," "The Past and the Future," "The Fear

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41 Horatius Bonar, "The Peace of God," p. 288.

of the Lord and its Results," "The Banished One Bearing Our Banishment," "The God of Grace," "Faith in an Unseen Christ," "The Sin Unto Death."

It was Bonar's invariable practice to begin his sermons with an introduction, which, in general, followed a definite pattern with little variation. Whether several long paragraphs or only a few short sentences, there are certain elements that are common to most of them. His introductions always began with the text. Then followed the explication of the text with regard to the context. After explaining the place of the text in its Scriptural relation, he made clear his purpose in preaching on the text, relating it especially to the spiritual needs of the congregation. At last he proceeded to sketch the outline he was to use, enumerating the points one by one. Such an outline is present in almost every sermon and is usually the last part of the introduction. A good example of one of his introductions is found in his sermon on "God's Yearnings Over Unbelieving Man," from Isaiah 48:18: "It is of Israel that the prophet is here speaking, Israel according to the flesh. It is over them that God is yearning, yearning in the fulness of sore-tried but still unshaken love. It is over Israel in their unbelief, apostacy, and rebelliousness that God is here represented as grieving, and his grief is that, that they would not allow him to bless them, that they would not receive peace and righteousness at his hands. He stretched out his hand all day long to a disobedient and gain-

saying people. Our text is beyond all question the language of love; yet it is also the language of upbraiding. It is the language of expostulation, of lamentation, of complaint, and of entreaty, - still it is the language of love, - of upbraiding love, expostulating love, lamenting love, complaining love, entreating love - 'O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.' There are, brethren, five points brought before us in this verse, to which I ask your attention. First of all there is God's desire to bless us. Second, there is our refusal to be blessed. Thirdly, there is God's grief at our refusal. Fourthly, there is the way in which we may yet obtain this blessing. Fifthly, there is the largeness of the blessing thus to be obtained."[42]

Following the introduction there came the main body of the sermon which discussed and developed the text. As most of his sermons were of the textual or expository type, his divisions were usually determined by the text or consisted of the several parts of the text itself. For example, in a sermon on Romans 14: 7-9, he makes this division: "Each of the three verses presents us with a separate statement; and these are the three points brought before us successively. First of all there is the setting aside of self, in the 7th verse - 'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.' Then there is, secondly, the

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[42] Horatius Bonar, "God's Yearnings Over Unbelieving Man," p. 309.

substitute for self, the Lord himself, in the 8th verse - 'For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' And, thirdly, there is the way in which this substitution was effected, in the 9th verse - 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.'"[43] In some sermons he followed more the topical method, with the subject developed according to its own nature. Thus, in a sermon entitled "Looking Unto Jesus" from Hebrews 12: 1, 2, the division is made as follows: "I. In looking, what do we see? II. In looking, how are we affected? III. In looking, what do we learn?"[44] His divisions stood out clearly in his preaching. Most of his sermons have only three or four divisions, but he made full use of the outline for the purpose of preventing the congregation from losing the trend of thought. Although his sermons were not long, judged by the standards of his day, he not only announced the main divisions of his discourse in his introduction, but as he proceeded with his development, he repeated the headings at the proper time. In addition, he frequently ended each division with a restatement of his original text, giving the impression that all his thought was centered upon the text. In developing a sermon, Bonar demonstrated a technique of simplicity and clearness which many preachers attempt, but which few use so effectively.

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[43] Horatius Bonar, "Entire Consecration to the Lord," p. 261.

[44] "Looking unto Jesus," op. cit., p. 138.

The conclusion of Bonar's sermon was no doubt meant to be the great climax for which the introduction and development had been the preparation. It was here that he concentrated his greatest efforts. His conclusions were generally short, pertinent, and fulfilled the aim of the sermon. All of them end on an evangelical note. He never left his hearers dangling or undecided as to what his purpose was - and his one purpose was to win souls for Christ. Not all preachers have the gift of being able to challenge their hearers to make decisions, but Bonar certainly had; every sermon preaches for a decision on the part of the individual hearer. He sought in the last few minutes of a sermon to isolate the individual from the crowd, and on a direct I-thou basis make a decisive claim for his salvation.

Certain elements which Bonar wove into his closing appeals are common to all his conclusions. It is to the Cross that he points in the conclusion of some of his sermons. He felt that by viewing the scene where "the blood of the Lamb" was shed for sinful man, men would most likely hear God's call to repentance and feel His claim to obedience. Preaching on "The Surety's Cross," he concludes: "O wondrous, glorious cross! Blessed interpreter of God to us! Scene of the great self-manifestation, the great revelation of the mind and heart of God! O cross of Christ, tell us more and more of this grace of God! Preach reconciliation to the alien, pardon to the guilty,

assurance of God's free yet holy love to the dark and suspicious soul! Speak to our hearts; speak to our consciences; pour in light; break our bonds; heal our wounds; - all by means of thy interpretation of the divine character, thy revelation of the righteous love of God!"[45] In other sermons he warns of the everlasting punishment awaiting the unsaved sinner. His conslusion to the sermon, "Entire Consecration to the Lord," reads: "O, man of earth, what is thy eternity to be? If thy life here is life without Christ, is thy eternity to be the same? Think what such an eternity will be to thee. Even if there were no hell, what will be an eternity without Christ? Perhaps thou thinkest little of that; and thou sayest to thyself, 'I can do without Christ here, and I shall be able to do without him hereafter.' Nay, my friend, it is not so. Thou canst do without him here, because thou canst contrive to forget him, - to forget him in the world, to forget him in pleasure, and in business; and this makes thee to do without him here. But hereafter there shall be no drowning of thy senses in such things as these, so as to prevent the conviction of thy infinite loss. Then the full knowledge of thy loss shall come up before thee, and it will not be a lost heaven merely, a lost kingdom, a lost inheritance, but it will be a LOST CHRIST. That will be the eternal sting; the sense of what thou hast lost in losing Christ. It will be the very bitterness of the cup of gall and

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45 Family Sermons, op. cit., p. 146f.

wormwood that shall then be given thee to drink. The everlasting sense of what thou hast lost in losing Christ shall be the very sting of the undying worm and the very torment of the ever burning fire."[46] In other sermons he holds out a bright picture of the rewards in store for the saved. Usually, however, all these elements are included in his final appeal, along with his dominant eschatological emphasis of Christ's Second Coming. His sermon on "Looking unto Jesus" concludes with a typical appeal: "Looking to him then, let us pass onward in the same way - looking to him let us hasten through the wilderness - looking to him let us live by faith and not by sight - looking to him let our joy and peace abound - looking to him let us live like strangers here - looking to him let us glory in tribulation - looking to him let us reach forward to the prize - looking to him let us anticipate the crown and the kingdom - looking to him let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, and looking to him let us hear his own voice which says, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.' 'Behold, I come as a thief.' 'Blessed is he that watcheth.' Amen."[47]

Passing from the structural aspect of Bonar's sermons to his literary style, the chief characteristic that strikes the reader is his austere simplicity. It was this feature of his sermons that gave them their force. There are few striking

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[46] "Entire Consecration," op. cit., p. 268.

[47] "Looking unto Jesus," op. cit., p. 141.

expressions, telling phrases, or vivid illustrations in his sermons; yet he has a way of expressing himself, which, though not always vivid, is still fresh and energetic. His was a chaste, matter-of-fact style, with no ornamentations, outstanding in no particular respect, but perfectly suitable as the vehicle for what he said. All his sermons are characterized by the smooth flow of carefully and properly chosen words. He seems to do everything in his power to make himself clear to his hearers.

Unlike many preachers of his time, he had the marked ability to be brief and to the point. He never allowed himself to become involved over a matter, exploring this aspect or that, but stuck directly to the subject and text. When words or technical phrases might be obscure as to their significance, he clarifies them. His sentences are usually short, though there is a variety in length, and they are not encumbered with digressive phrases or parenthetical clauses. He certainly does not affect to be eloquent, or preach above the understanding of his congregation. In short, his style is singularly direct, lucid, and easily understood.

Several features of his style are characteristic of the preacher and add a distinctive note to his sermons. The most striking of these is the comparatively little use he made of quotations and illustrations. Indeed, most of his sermons are devoid of illustrative material altogether, except for

Biblical references and quotations. He introduced Biblical material into his sermons in several ways. His most frequent method was merely to quote an appropriate verse, usually a familiar one to his hearers, without making any reference to its location in the Bible. At other times he uses Biblical language, refers to some person or event in the Bible without mentioning where it might be found, or mentions the Scripture reference together with a summary of thought or an indirect quotation from the passage. In whatever manner he uses them, his sermons are filled with passages and references from all parts of the Bible, and there is often a particular concentration of references at the very end of the sermon.

In the majority of his sermons his extra-Biblical illustrations are few, and they are primarily drawn from the world of nature. Such illustrations are nearly always comparative, and generally follow this almost poetical example: "The rivers of earth rise in some far off mountain, ofttimes inaccessible to human foot; so is it with this peace of God; its fountain head is the bosom of the Father yonder; and out of that infinite fountain-head, inaccessible to man, it has flowed down to us. The rivers of earth find their way down from those mountain heights, over rocks and precipices, and a thousand barriers impeding their progress till they reach the lowest vales of earth. So it is with this peace. It finds its way out of the bosom of the Father above, over a thousand

barriers till it reaches the poorest dwellings of earth, that every one may drink. It may be summer or winter, still the rivers of earth flow on; so is it with our peace; it is an everlasting, unchanging peace. It may be day or it may be night; still the rivers flow on; so is it with this peace; it is continuous and unbroken, by day and by night it is still flowing on. It may be through a gloomy valley, or a fair garden, the rivers of earth flow on continuously. So it is with our peace. Through whatever scene of earth you may be passing, this peace of God remains the same. Sometimes the rivers of earth sink low, and anon swell and overflow their banks, but still they pour themselves on. So is it with our peace - sometimes rising, sometimes falling, but still it is there. For the words of peace which God has spoken to us are words that nothing earthly can interrupt or mar. As the rivers of earth near the ocean, they widen in their channel, till they empty themselves into the infinite deep; so it is with our peace - it rises, and widens, and deepens as we move onward, until it pours itself into the eternal ocean."[48] In rare instances, however, when he spoke on some special occasion, his sermons are filled with all kinds of illustrations from every source. Such is the case, for example, in "God's Glory Declared," a sermon preached on behalf of the Religious Tract Society at the Mildmay Park Conference Hall, London, June 25th, 1877. In this sermon, beside numerous Scripture quotations,

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[48]"God's Yearnings," op. cit., p. 315.

he either mentions or quotes from Cicero, Pliny, Homer, Milton, Luther, St. Augustine, Crammer, Bradford, Hooker, Calvin, Owen, Howe, Newton, Boston, Chalmers, Scott, and Haldane. In addition, he uses several illustrations and comparisons from classical and current sources. Thus, while Bonar had an intimate acquaintance with the world's great literature, as a general rule he never quoted it, so far as is known, from the pulpit proper. In this respect his preaching is similiar to such masters in the art as Robertson and Brooks.

Another characteristic of his style is his habit of addressing his hearers, and this is particularly noticeable in his conclusions. "Brethren," "Child of God," "Man of the earth," "Sinners," "Man of pleasure," and "Man of God," are his most usual appellations, while occasionally he speaks to various groups of people in the congregation.

Closely associated with this feature is his use of questions, particularly as a means of application. "Is your pleasure your Christ? But will pleasure make you wise unto salvation? Will pleasure bring you into the everlasting kingdom? Is gold your Christ? But will gold make you wise, or be an introduction into the presence of God? Is the world your Christ? But will the world make you wise, or deliver you from the eternal darkness? Is sin your Christ? But will sin make you wise? Will sin save and bless you? Is literature your Christ? But will all earth's widest range of literature, make

you truly wise, or fill the void of your heart, or gladden you with abiding joy? Is science your Christ? But will science make you wise, - wise for eternity?[49]

A final characteristic of his style is his imperative exhortations and admonitions that are a common feature of every portion of his sermons. In the opening paragraph of one sermon he begins his pleas: "Child of God, have you used this volume aright? Have you prized it? Have you studied it? Have you prayed over it? Have you searched the Scriptures as you ought? And, sinner, thou child of the world, have you listened to it, or have you not yet listened to the voice that speaks to you out of it to you? Will you listen to it now? Will you not, O sinner, this night, if not hitherto, hearken to that voice - look into that Volume?"[50]

D. Evaluation

Horatius Bonar enjoyed a long and fruitful ministry. For almost fifty years he preached with great acceptance from two pulpits. Under his able, earnest, and faithful preaching of the Gospel, countless souls were led to the foot of the Cross. Passing years have erased the surface marks of his preaching, however, and its lasting impressions are visible only to God. He has left comparatively few sermons for one to judge his

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[49] Family Sermons, op. cit., p. 44f.

[50] "Second Coming of Christ," op. cit., p. 537.

ability as a preacher or evaluate his contribution in this realm of his ministry.

His extant sermons reveal nothing that is especially striking or impressive save a certain religious devoutness of tone. They affect no novelties or sensationalism. They follow the approved homiletic methods of the Scottish pulpit of that day. They advocate no changes in surrounding conditions, no new interpretations of Scripture, no new insights into spiritual truths. They defend Christianity upon the basis of its external evidences, denying the competence of human reason to criticize the content of historic revelation, although acknowledging its competence to apprehend and defend its evidences. In method and spirit they belong substantially to the eighteenth century. Taken as a whole, they have very little value today, except as interesting relics of the evangelical preaching of Bonar's period. Yet, they struck a popular note in their day and had a message for people in their century. There is a strong evangelical current running through them from start to finish. Bonar preached the free grace of God and the centrality of the Cross of Christ in a day when men's taste for Christianity relegated these great doctrines to the background. In addition, there is a ring of conviction in his sermons which constantly points to Him who is the Gospel, exalting Him as the sole hope and Redeemer who mediates the lifting love of God to fallen man. One cannot read them without feeling his sincerity and earnestness, and one cannot

be indifferent to what he said. A decision must be made. There are two sides to an issue, and one must choose on which side one stands. Dr. Robertson Nicoll is right when he says of Bonar's preaching: "Dr. Bonar exhibited with faithful simplicity and decision the great things of the Gospel, but he was never content without applying them to the consciences of his hearers."[51] Although his sermons in cold print are often dull and uninteresting, with no sharp phrases or vivid word pictures left impressed on the mind, the larger impression the reader gets is that here was a great soul striving to the best of his ability to interpret and impress "the great things of the Gospel" upon his hearers with purity of purpose and simplicity of expression. Horatius Bonar was truly in his own words: "An expounder of the Word and a preacher of the everlasting Gospel."[52]

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[51] Memories, p. 99.

[52] A statement made in reference to Thomas Chalmers in "Chalmers Centenary," op. cit., p. 1.

CHAPTER V

CHURCHMAN

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Introduction

The devoutly minded Scotsman has often been credited with a great love of controversy and contention on the subject of religion. Certainly the history of the Church in Scotland has been a succession of crises, and his fierce loyalty to Christ's cause and crown is no doubt a result of repeated conflict and struggle and trial and testing. If one's love can be measured by what one is willing to give up for it, it is plain that at several critical periods of its national history, Scotsmen have greatly valued their religious rights and privileges. Time and again they have not only argued for their faith, but have shown themselves ready to suffer and make costly sacrifice for it.

A. Bonar The Churchman

The stir of strife did not suit Horatius Bonar. Ordinarily he took little part in the controversies of the Church courts. He rarely attended meetings of the Presbytery, and

seldom made a speech in the Assembly Hall. He seemed content for the most part to leave the business of the Church in other hands. On several occasions, however, when principles were at stake which he held to be of vital importance, he spoke and wrote boldly and sometimes caustically. Dr. Theodore Cuyler writes of him: ". . . behind that benign countenance was a spirit as pugnacious in ecclesiastical controversy as that of the Roman Horatius 'who kept the bridge in the brave days of old.'"[1]

Two cardinal principles governed all Bonar's thought and action in the ecclesiastical issues of his time. The first was his belief in Christ's sovereignty over the nations and the spiritual independence of the Church. It was Bonar's constant concern to vindicate the autonomy of the Church. Within its own spiritual sphere, he held, the Church possessed a freedom which recognized only the restrictions of the Word of God. The Church must have complete immunity from State interference in ecclesiastical and religious matters. It must be entirely free to elect persons to, or depose them from, ecclesiastical offices; to determine questions of ecclesiastical policy; to decide all questions of faith. This freedom was her inalienable heritage, just as the State had its consequent jurisdiction within the realm of temporal affairs. Both must unite in consecrating their resources to Christ, as the Sovereign of the earth. "Christ's

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[1] Cuyler, op. cit., p. 40.

kingship over earth and all its nations is no secondary or subordinate article of our creed. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, and, as such, is the fountain-head of earthly rule and legislation, as well as of spiritual influence. The Church is one province of His dominion, the world is another. By both He is to be honoured and obeyed. Nations as well as Churches are to take their laws from Him. He is not only Head over all things to the Church, but He is Head over all things in the widest sense; for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. For rebellion against Him, for disobedience to His laws shall the Nations be judged, and not simply for immorality or open crime. Owen speaks of the 'bowing of the knee of magistracy at the name of Jesus;' and at that name nations as well as their rulers are to bow the knee."[2]

The second principle which he considered vital to the well-being of the Church was strict adherence to the doctrine of the Church, especially as expressed in the Westminster Confessions. He felt no difficulty in embodying what the Church believed in definite words, and no hesitation in subscribing his name to these explicit words. There was no need to alter the creed in deference to "modern enlightenment" or to keep abreast of the age. The creed should be tested by the unerring Word, and by that Word let stand or fall, whether the age agreed or not. Such changes should not be made without careful consideration, and then only

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[2] Union Inadmissible on the Basis Proposed, p. 96.

if the whole Church approved. When an individual changed his personal beliefs and could no longer adhere to the Westminster Standards without an allowance or reservation, he should be willing to bear the penalty of changing and break the tie between himself and the Church whose doctrines he refused to qualify. There could be no middle course in Bonar's mind; either one must subscribe or leave the Church. "Let us subscribe only what we believe, and let us believe what we subscribe. Articles rendered equivocal or unmeaning by a qualifying preamble, are not articles with which upright men ought to have anything to do. If we have begun to feel that we have signed too much and too stringently, let us withdraw our names from the document, but not attempt an alteration of a document, which, while it relieved our consciences, aggrieved the consciences of others, and destroyed the Church's ancient witness-bearing to the truth of God. The articles in a Confession are meant to be determinate dogmas. Great pains were taken by the Westminster divines to make them such. They have hitherto been accepted as such."[3] Bonar thus believed in letting the Confession of Faith alone, and in using more conscience in regard to it. Departure from its teaching on any one point was felt to be serious in its consequences. He would have readily agreed with his friend Nixon of Montrose who put the matter bluntly: "Our standards are but an echo in human language of the infallible Word."[4]

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[3] Ibid., p. 94. [4] J. R. Fleming, The Church In Scotland, 1843-1874, p. 222.

These principles can best be understood when they are seen in action in three of the controversies which occupied the mind of the Scottish Church during the nineteenth century. For this purpose it is necessary to present the broad features of the conflicts and show Bonar's part in them.

B. His Principles In Action

1. The Disruption

"The Disruption," writes G. D. Henderson, "was an incident in the search after Liberty."[5] The controversy arose over the familiar problem of the proper relation of Church and State. It was the same struggle for the spiritual independence of the Church and the "Crown Rights of the Redeemer" which began in the days of John Knox, was maintained by Andrew Melville with his doctrine of "Twa kings and twa kingdoms in Scotland," and asserted with partial success by the Covenanters and the Seceders. It had been obscured for more than a century within the Establishment, but always maintained with more or less distinctness by a minority in the Church and the small groups that had broken away. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it was brought back to abounding life by the coincidence of a democratic uprising and an evangelical revival.

The Church was led to this question of "The Headship of Christ" by a practical problem which naturally arose in that

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[5] G. D. Henderson, Heritage, A Study of the Disruption, p. 59.

particular period of democratic progress. It concerned the rights of the people to choose their minister. The Moderate party, which was fast falling from power after more than a hundred years' supremacy, acquiesced in the ancient system of Patronage with its vested heritable right to select the minister. The Evangelicals, on the other hand, disliked the system and there were growing signs of an anti-patronage spirit in the Church. In 1834 the Evangelical party gained a majority in the General Assembly for the first time and used their power to pass an important Act "anent Calls," known as the Veto Act, which declared that no minister be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the people. It gave effect to the principle that "if at the moderating in a call to a vacant pastoral charge the major part of the male heads of families, members of the vacant congregation and in full communion with the church shall disapprove of the person in whose favour the call is proposed to be moderated in, such disapproval shall be deemed sufficient ground for the Presbytery rejecting such person, and that he shall be rejected accordingly."[6]

The Veto Act was not directed against Patronage. In reality its object was to protect it by a judicious infusion of the popular element. The Evangelical leaders had little desire or sympathy for popular election of ministers. "Between the two kinds of patronage," said Thomas Chalmers, "the ostensible patron-

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[6] Ibid., p. 65.

age of the present system, and that disguished patronage which operates with a force as resistless, though unseen, under the forms of a popular election, I would never once think of comparing the likelihood of a good result."[7] They heartily believed in the Establishment and tolerated Patronage as a necessary part of such an arrangement. Although Chalmers thought that Parliament should have been asked to legislate on the matter concurrently with the Church, the Government actually began to exercise Crown patronage in accord with the new Act.

Within a few months of the passing of the Act, however, trouble came in connection with the settlement of ministers in vacant charges. In October 1834 a probationer of the Church, Robert Young, was presented to the Perthshire parish of Auchterarder by the patron, the Earl of Kinnoull. Although his spiritual, moral and intellectual qualifications were not questioned, his chief defect being that he was the nominee and nephew of the unpopular factor, the congregation was opposed to his settlement. Only two heads of families along with the factor signed the call, and 287 out of a possible 330 heads of families recorded their Veto against him. In the face of these circumstances, and in accordance with the Assembly Act, the Presbytery declared him rejected and refused to proceed with his ordination. After much appealing and protesting on various details in the ecclesiastical courts, patron and presentee at last brought the matter

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[7] Campbell, op. cit., p. 226.

before the Court of Session in 1837. The problem before the Court of thirteen judges was so intricate and difficult that they were eventually divided in their opinion, but the majority decision declared in effect that the Veto Act was illegal. The Church had exceeded its rights and entered into the province of the State.

The decision of the Court of Session, later sustained by the House of Lords, brought consternation to the Evangelicals, and the conflict shifted from the problem of Non-intrusion to that of Spiritual Independence. In the excited Assembly of 1838 Dr. Robert Buchanan set in the forefront the exalted conception of the "sole headship to the Lord Jesus Christ" and the doctrine of the Church's spiritual independence with all its associations brought down from Reformation and Covenanting days. The Assembly adopted a militant Declaration of Spiritual Independence which advanced claims for the Church courts in no uncertain terms. "This spiritual jurisdiction," read the Declaration, "they will assert, and at all hazards defend, by the help and blessing of that great God who in the days of old enabled their fathers amid manifold persecutions to maintain a testimony even to the death for Christ's kingdom and crown."[8]

Soon the area of conflict widened and other cases complicated the issue. The Presbytery of Dunkeld refused to induct the presentee to the charge of Lethendy, and in the face

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[8] Ibid., p. 234.

of an interdict of the Court of Session ordained another presentee who had received the call of the congregation. For this disobedience of the order of the civil courts they were summoned before the bar of the Court of Session and severely reprimanded for having disregarded its authority. In the Presbytery of Strathbogie the Moderate majority insisted on ordaining a rejected presentee in defiance of the Veto and the decision of the Assembly in the Marnoch case within their bounds. For this action they were suspended from their ministerial offices, although it was maintained in their defense that they had merely carried out the legal law of the land in preference to the illegal measures of the Assembly. The whole situation soon became intolerable as law pleas multiplied and the Court of Session continued to rain interdicts upon all who disputed its authority in the ecclesiastical sphere. Finally an appeal was made to Parliament to intervene in the conflict.

While the Whig ministers would offer no official Government help in the matter, the Earl of Aberdeen offered his personal assistance and introduced a bill in Parliament to make it possible for a Presbytery to take into account the declared opposition of a congregation. The bill required, however, that a congregation must state reasons for their opposition. The Evangelicals regarded it essential that the congregation be allowed dissent without reasons, and it soon appeared that Lord Aberdeen and the negotiating Non-intrusionists could not agree on the matter. In the Assembly

of 1840 he was attacked so bitterly that he felt it useless to persevere with the bill in Parliament.

The next effort at a peaceful solution was made by the Duke of Argyll, who introduced a measure which for all practical purposes embodied the Veto Act. It had the warm support of the Assembly of 1841, but before the bill could be passed by Parliament the political situation changed, Sir Robert Peel and the Tories succeeded to power, and the bill was shelved.

The colorful Assembly of 1842 formulated its views in two famous documents, the Address on Patronage and the Claim of Right. The first declared that "Patronage is a grievance, has been attended with much injury to the cause of true religion in this Church and Kingdom, is the main cause of the difficulties in which the Church is at present involved, and it ought to be abolished."[9] The reply of the Government expressed the conviction that the Church of Scotland under Patronage had fulfilled its purposes well, and "any shock which might endanger this great national establishment would be regarded by Her Majesty's servants as a fearful calamity."[10]

The Claim of Right was a long manifesto which declared Christ to be the only Head of the Church, listed a succession of Acts of Parliament which confirmed the exclusive jurisdiction of the Church within its own province, illustrated the invasion of the jurisdiction of the Church and encroachments upon its

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[9] Henderson, op. cit., p. 93.

[10] Ibid., p. 93f.

spiritual privileges, and concluded with a solemn summons to Christian people everywhere to witness that it was for adherence to the doctrine of the headship of Christ that the Church was now in peril.

These two documents were sent to the Government along with a further Memorial which stated that the Church was " entitled to know whether the Government of the country are to rest upon the views of the constitution of the Church now acted upon by the courts of law, or are willing to adopt measures for securing her in the possession of those privileges which she considers to belong to her under that constitution."[11] The Government viewed all three measures together and rejected the Non-intrusionists demands.

Before the Government reply was received the Evangelicals held a dramatic and effective Convocation of 465 ministers in Edinburgh in November 1842. The Convocation passed two resolutions which amounted to a pledge of separation unless the Government yielded to their demands in the Claim of Right. It now appeared that a disruption was inevitable. A last effort in the direction of settlement was made in Parliament by Mr. Fox Maule who presented a petition for a committee of inquiry, but the vote was decisive against it. In spite of the intensity of feeling abroad in Scotland, the Government did not believe that a serious secession from the Church was likely. They failed to measure the strength

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[11] Ibid., p. 96f.

of religious conviction, however, and the Disruption of the Church of Scotland was the result.

On May 18, 1843 the General Assembly met in St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh. Dr. Welsh, the retiring Moderator, took the chair and after prayer read a carefully worded Protest declaring that a free Assembly of the Church under existing conditions was impossible. When he finished he laid the document on the table and followed by Chalmers, Gordon, Patrick McFarlan, Candlish, Cunningham, and others on the Evangelical side of the House, moved out the door to march in procession along the crowded streets to a hall in the Canonmills to form the Free Church of Scotland.

For Horatius Bonar, who gave himself wholeheartedly to the Evangelical cause from the beginning, the whole controversy involved the crown rights between Christ or the State as Head of the Church. When he returned from the November Convocation of Ministers he told his Kelso congregation: "The whole contest, from the beginning, has been concerning the laws of Christ, more especially those pertaining to the choosing of Ministers and the government of his Church. We have held that Christ's people ought to have the calling of their Ministers, and that it is through them (i.e. through his people) that he expresses his mind, so as to point out the fitting Pastor, and not through the Presbytery or the Patron. Again we have held, that Christ's ordained office-bearers are the only rulers of his Church and administrators of his laws, with whose discipline, government, ordination,

deposition, excommunication, no civil lawgiver or judge may interfere. The questions, then, on which the controversy has hinged, have been such as these. Is Christ our lawgiver? Is he our only lawgiver? Has he really given us laws? Are we bound to act upon these laws? Are we at liberty, on any pretext, or in obedience to any other authority, to set these laws aside or keep them in abeyance? Has any earthly lawgiver a right to abrogate these laws, or to compel us to violate them? When Christ's laws and man's laws are opposed to each other, which are we to obey? These have been the chief points discussed; and if so, is this not a sacred, as well as a momentous warfare? If Christ be not our lawgiver, if he has given us no laws for our guidance, if we are at liberty to alter, or abrogate or neglect them at pleasure, if we may obey man in preference to God, then are we in error from the very outset; but if, in reality, it be all otherwise, then we are acting no unchristian, no unreasonable, no rebellious part, in maintaining our ground at every hazard and in the face of all human opposition, however formidable its array of numbers, of wealth, of station, of influence, of power. It is not merely the hem of Christ's garment, that men are seeking to rend; (though even that were worthy to form the struggle of an age;) it is the sceptre of universal royalty that they are seeking to wrench from his grasp; it is the pillars of his throne they are striving to overthrow."[12]

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[12] Horatius Bonar, Can We Remain In The Church?, p. 1f.

Bonar's intense spirit in the whole conflict addressed itself to the deeper emotions of that large section of the Church of which he was a typical representative, and no small part of the success, and no small part of the bitterness, of the Disruption were due to him and his friends' fiery appeals. Along with Robert McCheyne, a characteristic Evangelical of the period, he had worked with consuming zeal in the work of an evangelist, and his influence was far wider than his own parish or city. When the conflict began he wrote a series of articles marking every stage of the controversy in the Presbyterian Review of which he was the editor. With his own funds he aided the Rev. Walter Wood and other friends in conducting a district newspaper designed to be conducted on lines similar to those of the Witness in Edinburgh. As the crisis approached he went all over the border districts arousing the people to his cause and gathering financial support for it. In a typical appeal he says: ". . . if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, then you will not hesitate. Neither will you grudge to part with what he now asks of you. You will count yourselves honoured in being permitted to make the sacrifice, and your only regret will be, that you have so little to give up for Him who for your sakes freely laid down his life upon the tree. Be not therefore of a doubtful mind. Decide boldly. Be not like the children of Ephraim, who though armed and carrying bows turned back in the day of battle. See that ye be found upon the side of Christ in this sifting time.

Gather yourselves like brethren into one body. Speak together, act together, pray together. Strengthen each other's hands, and confirm each other's faith and love. Be of one heart and of one soul."[13]

Finally, on the day which rent the Church, he unhesitatingly joined with his brothers and friends in the long procession from St. Andrew's Church to the Canonmills to form the Free Church. "We quit one position," Bonar declared, " but only to occupy another, from which nothing but death shall dislodge us. We now entrench ourselves on higher ground. There, with the same banner unfolded and the same watchword inscribed, we encamp anew, not expecting peace, but to prepare for the persecution which will not cease to follow us; for the same spirit that has assailed us hitherto will continue to do so to the end. Be it so. We cast ourselves on God, the God of our fathers. We call to mind the days of old, the deeds of our Church in ancient times. We are strengthened by the remembrance of our fathers, who counted not their lives dear unto them; but went cheerfully to the prison and the scaffold, willing in life to be outcasts for Christ, and in death content with the solitude of a moorland tomb."[14] It may be said of Bonar's efforts in the conflict as was said of McCheyne: "The sacrifices and the venturesomeness of the Disruption would have been impossible save in an atmosphere such as he created."[15]

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[13] Ibid., p. 16.

[14] Ibid., p. 14.

[15] Campbell, op. cit., p. 243.

2. The Union Controversy

It had not been long after the stir of the Disruption had subsided when a strong desire for closer relations sprang up between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church. It was natural that such a feeling should exist; both adhered to the same form of church government, subscribed to the same Confession of Faith, were at one on the question of the spiritual independence of the Church, and appeared to be in substantial agreement in regard to questions of discipline and worship. A movement in the direction of union between them took concrete form during 1863, when each Church appointed a committee to negotiate with a view toward union.

During the first year the joint-committee discovered the agreements which the Churches held in common and the distinctive principles about which they differed. The principal disagreement was on the vexing problem of the relation of the civil magistrate and the Church. Far more than any variation in Christian doctrine, this was the real point on which the two Churches held different views. The Free Church committee declared that "the State may lawfully employ the national resources in the support of the Church's ordinances . . . and that the Church may lawfully accept such support when her spiritual independence is preserved entire."[16] The United Presbyterian committee, on the other hand, asserted that the Civil Magistrate is not judge for

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[16] Fleming, op. cit., p. 176.

the community of what is true in religion, has not authority to prescribe a creed or form of worship, and that it is not the province of the State to provide for the expense of religious ministrations."[17]

The Free Church committee reported to the General Assembly in 1864, and was reappointed under its former instructions. To Dr. Julius Wood and others in the Free Church, however, it appeared that the differences already evinced were irreconcilable and that the committee should henceforth be restricted in its aim to the question of co-operation between the Churches. He was joined in 1865 by Dr. John Forbes and a small group who insisted on a determinate conclusion on the Voluntary principle before any further procedure. There was never any anti-union party in the United Presbyterian Synod, but there were Voluntary stalwarts who agreed that they would not be compromised by any undue concession.

At the Assembly of 1866 the committee reported that the whole field of inquiry had been gone over with satisfactory hopes of a common basis of union being reached and desired the Assembly to send down their findings to the Presbyteries, and solicit suggestions as to the further conduct of the negotiations. Certain doctrinal differences had come in to complicate the issue, particularly with regard to the extent of the Atonement, which gave serious concern to the orthodox. However, the committee's

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[17] Ibid., p. 176.

bill passed a counter-motion to the effect that the committee be discharged, and an overwhelming vote showed the confidence of the Assembly in the prevailing policy.

The Assembly of 1867 was a critical point in the negotiations, and from that time forward the question took the form of a controversy. The United Presbyterian side had become impatient and the time had come in the Free Church to make a forward move. Accordingly, when the committee brought in their report, Dr. Rainy asked the Assembly to declare that the amount of divergence already disclosed constituted no bar to the Union, and that the committee should now give attention to other points, particularly those dealing with the worship, government, finance, and discipline of the Church. Against this proposal there were two motions, differing only in matters of detail, one by Dr. James Begg and the other by Dr. William Nixon, to the effect that the committee be reappointed but that an entire reserve of judgement be made until the whole question had been discussed. It was plain that the real object of the opposition was to render further negotiation futile. In the final vote Dr. Rainy's motion was carried by a majority of 346 to 120, whereupon Dr. Begg and his followers lodged a strongly worded protest and withdrew from membership on the Union committee. "Hitherto," says Professor Carnegie Simpson, "anti-unionism had been a tendency, now it was an organisation."[18] From this time onward there was no attempt

[18] Ibid., p. 180.

to compromise, and the cleavage between the two groups became accentuated as the years passed.

The controversy was now waged with great vigor throughout the country. The opponents of Union looked upon the concession which the majority were prepared to make to Voluntary principles as a surrender of vital truth, and were determined to save the Free Church from what they regarded as a subversion of her constitution. Dr. Bonar, a stalwart of the ultra-conservative element in the Church, drew up a long explanatory and defensive Statement on behalf of those who were now styled the Anti-Union party. It proclaimed the policies of the minority in a forceful manner: "Our object is not the promulgation of what is new, but the conservation of what is old. We are not innovators, tampering with our venerable constitution, and advocating changes either in our principles or in the working out of these. We contend for the integrity of our Standards, not simply in their abstract propositions, but in the practical interpretation of them, as assumed and acted out by ourselves hitherto, and by our fathers since the Reformation; an interpretation which forms one great feature in our historical identity, and one great link in the chain which connects the Free Church with the Church of Knox and Melville, of Henderson and Rutherford. . . . In the Church of the future we wish to see the great elements which have impregnated the constitution of the Church of the past not eliminated but reproduced. . . .

As appears to us, judging from the published materials, the projected union can only be effected by such a change or relaxation of creed, constitution, and civil title-deeds, as will amount to a dissolution of the Free Church, and the construction of a new body, with a new name, on a new basis, with a stock of new points, called 'open questions,' for agitation and warfare; in which newly constructed body Free Church principles, if still held by individuals, cannot be acted out or even spoken out, without offence and variance."[19]

In the meantime an elaborate machinery of agitation was set in motion. A monthly magazine called The Watchword was started under Dr. Begg's editorship which was conducted in a bitterly polemical spirit. Many speeches and many pamphlets on both sides of the controversy, resembling in violence those which preceded the Disruption, flooded the whole country. The cause of orthodoxy as well as that of established religion was declared to be in danger. It became increasingly apparent that the Union contemplated could be effected only at the expense of disunion within the Free Church. In a speech typical of the high feeling of the time, Bonar proposed discontinuance of the union negotiations on the grounds of the threatened compromise of Free Church principles and the dissentions among themselves: "We are in earnest; we have weighed the matter, and counted the cost. We would hinder no brother from acting out his convictions;

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19 Horatius Bonar, Statement Explanatory and Defensive, pp. 10, 16.

but surely these convictions cannot lead him to do violence to ours. What we claim, we give; what we give, we claim. The brethren of a Church are under compact to deal with each other on the footing of the articles which they subscribe in common. We wish to abide by these, in the sense in which we all subscribed them some twenty or forty years ago. If our opposition to the present scheme of compromise and open questions be founded on any non-natural sense which we have attached to these articles, we are willing to be undeceived; if not, may we not ask that the compact between all who signed them be respected and preserved intact? . . . At first there was the kindly expression of a desire for unanimity; not a hoof was to be left behind. Now the tone is changed, and the cry comes, 'Union even at the cost of disruption.' Formerly, those 'extreme' brethren, who still retained their Disruption feelings, were to be allowed an indefinite time to pass from the stage; now, we are only to have five or ten years to die out; and every death amongst us will be hailed as the happy removal of a barrier in the way of union, - a union whose memorial will thus be the church-yard monuments of the men of whom, in the Convocation of 1842, it was said, 'Ye are in our hearts, to die and to live with you.'"[20]

The first effects of the anti-union agitation were seen at the Assembly of 1868, when overtures from ten Synods

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20 Horatius Bonar, Speech on the Union Question, pp. 30-32.

and forty-seven Presbyteries expressed dissatisfaction with the action of the previous year. The Union committee suggested continued friendly discussion and prayerful consideration but there was no sign of any cessation in the strife. The following year the Union leaders were content to suggest that the complete report be sent to the Presbyteries asking them to deliberate on the whole subject unfettered by the resolutions of former Assemblies. The opposition motion asked "that no further steps be taken till negotiations can be resumed with due regards to Scriptural principles and the peace of the Church."[21] Although the numbers of the opposition fell on this occasion to 89, there were threats and counter-threats and the contingency of Disruption openly faced. According to Dr. Thomas Smith, Bonar was the first of the Anti-Union party to intimate distinctly that Union on the terms proposed could only be accomplished at the cost of Disruption. "Sir, if these articles are accepted," he said, "if a new church is based upon them, I for one can be neither a minister nor a member of such a Church. They exclude me - and I speak, I daresay, for others; but they exclude myself certainly. If I am a Free Churchman - if I maintain Free Church principles, as I have done all along - I would on no consideration be a minister of a Church based on such articles as these."[22]

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[21] Fleming, op. cit., p. 182.

[22] Thomas Smith, Memoirs of James Begg, D.D., II, 504.

The Assembly of 1870 reflected the determined attitude of the Anti-Unionists when they refused even to debate the subject without first tabling a protest against their being bound by any conclusions of the debate. This move so aroused the majority that they sent down a report to the Presbyteries with the question: "Whether apart from other considerations bearing on the present movement there is any objection in principle to the formation of an incorporating union among the negotiating Churches on the footing and basis of the Westminster Confession of Faith as at present accepted by the said Churches."[23] The year between the Assembly of 1870 and that of 1871 was a period of intense excitement and keen agitation. Public meetings were held throughout the country for and against the Union proposed. Bonar considered this remit of the Assembly an attempt to alter the constitution of the Free Church. In a speech delivered in November 1870 he stated: "The remit of the Assembly is said to be simply as to the question of principle. To me it appears to be the question of an alteration in the constitution of the Free Church. For the last four years there has been a systematic and sustained attempt to depreciate certain doctrines, to let them down from the high level on which our fathers placed them, and thus to affix a stigma upon them. This scheme for lowering these seems now brought to a bearing on the suggestion of a new formula which will facilitate belief; which will turn the determinate into the indeterminate; and which

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[23] Fleming op. cit., p. 183.

will enable men to subscribe a Confession to which they do not give either assent or consent."[24] He concluded this long speech with these solemn words which left no doubt as to his course of action: "I am fully aware of the gravity of our present circumstances, and would speak accordingly. It is now to me a life and death struggle; it is to our Church the same. My own future course, along with that of many beloved brethren, is involved in the question before us, in the issue now at stake. I do not conceal from myself the personal as well as the ecclesiastical results of the present appeal to Presbyteries. The decision of our Courts will go far to determine, not merely our Church's estimate of certain doctrines, but the future ecclesiastical position and connection of not a few of us. To my brethren of the majority this may seem an over-statement of the magnitude of the crisis; to us of the minority it is no exaggeration. Even if the actual Union is delayed, the declaration of Presbyteries, under the Barrier Act, will determine the future condition of our creed and the future constitution of our Church. The change of the constitution brings the crisis; the consummation of the Union is the simple sequence of the changed constitution. It is the change of constitution that brings the pressure upon our consciences, not the mere carrying out of that change. No declaration of the Assembly that it is inexpedient to carry out the change immediately can relieve that pressure

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[24] Union Inadmissible, op. cit., p. 90.

or restore the constitution to which in 1843 we vowed our allegiance. . . . Setting high value on the truth of Christ's sovereignty over the nations, we will endeavour, God helping us, to save it for the Church and for the world."[25]

The motion submitted to the Assembly of 1871 by Sir Henry Moncreiff was a virtual abandonment of the Union proposal. It stated that in deference to the difficulties felt among some members of the Assembly, the negotiations should be suspended on a large scale, and the committee directed to measures best fitted to bring the two Churches into more friendly relations. Nothing would satisfy the Anti-Unionists, however, but that the movement should cease and the committee be discharged. When Moncreiff's motion passed with its usual majority of 270, Dr. Begg handed in a protest signed by 53 ministers and 56 elders. "Nothing," says J. R. Fleming, "could have proved more strikingly how difficult it is to allay any ecclesiastical quarrel when once it is stirred into unholy activity. The demon of party spirit had taken such possession that any concession suggested by the majority seemed only to intensify its violence."[26]

In the Assembly of 1872 the Union committee brought forward a plan of Mutual Eligibility, under which the ministers of the negotiating bodies might be called to congregations connected with Churches other than their own, and settled over them on their signing the formula which these Churches imposed. When

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[25] Ibid., pp. 95-97.

[26] Fleming, op. cit., p. 184.

it was known in the spring of the year that this proposal was to be brought before the Assembly there was strong opposition and much agitation. The Anti-Unionists held that if the arrangement was carried out it would mean in practical effect a Union without even the safeguards in the matter of public testimony which the former proposals would have secured. A petition with over sixty thousand signatures was laid on the table of the Assembly protesting against it and demanding that further discussion of union cease. The Assembly agreed, however, to send an overture down to the Presbyteries by a majority of 172.

A keen agitation was kept up by the dissentients during the course of the next year. Before the Assembly met in 1873 they tooks steps to raise a fund to fight the threatened battle in the courts. The opinion of eminent counsel was taken regarding disposal of property in the event of a disruption, and it seemed certain that the Church was to be rent asunder once more. Before the Assembly met a building was hired to which the minority were to withdraw if the step of separation was taken.

It was in this mood of gravity and impending disaster that the Assembly gathered for the final encounter.[27] There was no thought of compromise by the majority. Dr. Candlish moved that the overture regarding mutual eligibility be passed into a standing law of the Church despite the desire of the minority

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27 An attempt by Bonar and Professor Macgregor for a conference of leaders on each side of the question failed at the last minute, see Letter from Dr. Charles J. Brown to Dr. Horatius Bonar.

that it should be abandoned altogether. After discussion they agreed to a compromise which in effect rendered the Act so ungenerous as to make it futile. The resolutions of the majority were allowed to pass without a vote, and the minority was permitted to enter their dissent, thus saving the Church from a second Disruption.

The failure of these negotiations was a great disappointment to men like Candlish and Buchanan. Dr. Candlish, in his opening speech before the Assembly, said bitterly: "We take the attitude of beaten men. We surrender. We surrender to a minority. They have got the victory. They have compelled us to desist from prosecuting the movement toward incorporating union."[28] Thus in a somewhat ignoble manner this second Ten Years' Conflict came to an end.

While the great majority felt that the tide of Christian opinion had been turned by a small company of bigots and obstructists, Bonar and his friends were content to be so labeled for the preservation of the "Free Church principles" they held so dear. Rightly or wrongly they fought the negotiations because they conscientiously felt that those principles were in danger. Bonar justified his own position in the controversy in these words: "I am not, neither have I been, a fomenter of divisions, - save in the sense in which we were charged with being such by our Moderate brethren twenty-six years ago, when we did imperil the

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[28] Walker, op. cit., p. 250.

Church's peace for the sake of principles which were more precious than peace. But I may say more than this. For nearly four years, while the negotiations were going on, I remained silent and neutral, waiting for the issue. Neither by word nor deed did I endeavour to create dissension, nor to impede efforts for union. I saw difficulties; but I thought that these would dissolve as we approached them, or would so develop themselves that we should be all of one mind respecting them. I refused to take up extreme ground, or to do anything that would either estrange or irritate, hoping that in the process of time we might see eye to eye, and our way made plain. . . . My own conscience acquits me of blame in this matter. I sought for peace as long as I could; and the real cause of discord I must be allowed to ascribe to the proceedings of those who, by their propositions of compromise, and deeds of unwise haste, compelled neutral men, like myself, to take up a position which we should gladly have avoided."[29]

3. The Robertson Smith Case

Dr. John Tullock, speaking in 1874 on theological conditions in Scotland, referred to "the rise of a new spirit of thought unconnected with the old standards," and traced the causes of the movement to "wider historical and critical study of the New Testament and early Christian records, to literary,

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[29] Speech on the Union Question, op. cit., p. 26f.

intellectual, and personal intercourse with England, and to increased acquaintance with German theology."[30] In this new departure from the orthodox views of the past, Scotland took an important share under the leadership of Robertson Smith.

The young and talented scholar was named to the chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis in Aberdeen University at the age of twenty-four. On account of his eminence as a Biblical scholar, he was asked to write several articles for the Encyclopaedia Britannica. For the views propounded in these contributions, notably for his article "Bible," he was brought before the tribunals of the Church. Three main charges were brought against him: denying that the Aaronic priesthood was instituted in the wilderness, alleging that the legislative parts of Deuteronomy were a propheitc recasting of the Mosaic law not older than the seventh century B.C., denying the verbal infallibility of the books of Chronicles.

When these views became know the Church was thrown into a state of profound agitation. It prided itself on its orthodoxy, and regarded the Bible as an authoritative oracle of God placed by Him in the hands of believers to be the only guide of faith and morals. To depart by a hairbreadth from the traditional views of the structure, authorship, and authenticity of the Scriptures was shocking to the vast majority of the membership of the Free Church. Bonar, although he took little part in

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[30] Fleming, op. cit., p. 221.

the discussion of the case, followed it with intense interest.[31] Along with the few surviving stalwarts of the Disruption in the Church like James Begg, Wilson of Dundee, and Sir Henry Moncreiff, he pressed for the condemnation of the Professor's views and his removal from his chair. Bonar felt that Smith's writings could not possibly be reconciled with a reverent regard for the authority of the Scriptures. In his only speech on the case before the Assembly of 1878 he would not admit that, because of his advancing years, he was incompetent to deal with these questions. It was nearly fifty years since they had all these questions before them in their studies and all these difficulties were stated, and, as they considered, thoroughly exploded. These difficulties had risen again, and they discerned the old faces of the old errors. There was one thing which he noticed now which did not exist in the old days. There was a wonderful earnestness in hunting out errors in the Bible that was utterly astounding - an eagerness to discover errors, not to be answered but to be pronounced unanswerable. When they discovered errors in former days, they set themselves to answer them or solve the difficulties; but the idea in the present day was that the more errors they could discover the better - and upon these errors, these difficulties, these inconsistencies they would construct a theory, a new theory,

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[31] As Bonar did not take a leading part in the case or write in connection with it, it is not necessary to present a detailed account. For an interesting account, see Henry F. Henderson, The Religious Controversies of Scotland, pp. 207-230.

by means of which, in some circuitous way, they seemed to get rid of the errors by a reconstruction of the Old Testament. We should say to Smith as was said to one on the detection of a similar deception, "Why hath Satan filled thine head to lie to the Holy Ghost? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."[32]

The matter was brought before the General Assembly in 1877, and was followed by four years of bitter and complicated strife culminating in Smith's dismissal from his post in 1881. Although the controversy ended in the defeat of Smith himself, he won nevertheless a notable victory for freedom which soon gained ground from the support consistently given to it by men like George Adam Smith and Marcus Dods. In reality the case proved to be the decisive battle between the old school and the new. The old rigid formalism to which Bonar and his friends clung was fast disappearing, and the Free Church, which formerly had prided itself upon its unbending conservatism of thought, was to learn to glory in the liberalism of its theology.

C. Evaluation

The most striking characteristic of Horatius Bonar as a Churchman was the consistent and unbending manner in which he remained true to his early principles and convictions. Whatever the circumstances, however small the "suffering and protesting

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[32] See Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, held at Glasgow, May 1878, pp. 112-114.

remnant" in which he found himself, he never left the standard he had raised in the beginning of his ministry. Through all the perplexing ecclesiastical issues of his time, Bonar adhered with unyielding tenacity to those principles which he believed to be rooted and grounded in the Word of God. His line of action was always the outcome of this intense personal conviction. He did not enjoy the din of controversy, and seldom took an active part in the business of the Church courts. When he felt his principles in danger, however, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the fight, though it usually meant being a member of a minority in a cause that was generally unpopular.

Bonar had a high and noble concept of the Church. He regarded the Church and the State as two independent authorities, each autonomous within its own sphere, the Church in spiritual matters and the State in temporal affairs, but it was the duty of the civil magistrate to acknowledge and support the Christian faith in an Established Church. This is a position which rests upon the great doctrine of Christ's Headship over the nations. The risen Redeemmer sits on the throne of universal dominion, and has been made Head over all things. It was Bonar's loyalty to this doctrine which determined his part in the Disruption and the Union Controversy. Closely connected with this view of the nature of the Church was his reverent regard for the orthodox faith of the Church. He would not tolerate any departure from the "faith once delivered to the Saints." From his standpoint any tendency

to shake loose from the rigid scholastic Calvinism of the Westminster Standards was a course away from that faith.

The modern Christian is apt to look upon some of his views, especially his consistent and uncompromising Calvinistic dogmas, as those of a narrow-minded bigot and obstructionist. It is, for example, difficult to sympathize with his lack of understanding of the true significance and inevitableness of the movement associated with the name of Robertson Smith. It seems incredible that in a time of momentous spiritual discoveries which were to change the outlook of the Church as it had not been changed for centuries, Bonar could not adapt his dogmas to the practical and changing demands of his time. His contribution would have been quite different and much greater if he had possessed a better sense of proportion in doctrinal matters and a wider tolerance of the progressive movements of his time. From his position he could see in them only error, evil and the dissolution of revealed truth. While one cannot always agree with his stern and unflinching views, however, one cannot help but admire the consistent course of action of a man of unconquerable integrity and purity of motive. Here plainly is a man who can claim to be a worthy descendant of Knox and Melville, who spoke the truth as he saw it, and would not turn his back in the day of battle.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

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It is amazing that the life and work of a man of the caliber of Horatius Bonar should have passed so quickly off the scene and out of the minds of men. The passing years, however, have all but erased his memory, and few Christians of today are aware of the reputation and influence which he enjoyed for nearly half a century as one of the leaders in the religious life of Scotland. This is not surprising when one considers that he was a man of modest and retiring habits, whose whole life was so subordinated to his work, that most writers have either passed over his life with a scant outline of important dates and brief mention of his accomplishments, or have ignored his life completely. Then, too, it must be remembered that Bonar was no barrier-breaking theologian, preacher, or churchman. Everywhere he stood four-square for the old order, and that order has largely passed away. With it has gone much of the influence and tradition of which he was a leading exponent.

If that were all to be said of Horatius Bonar, and his life or work has nothing of abiding value to contribute

to us today, this study would have been a pointless academic exercise. Such is not the case. In him was seen the glow and power of the prophets, a man whose heart burned with the urgency of the transforming power of his message, a personality submerged in the Personality whose Gospel he proclaimed. A man of action and of letters, his life was the result of the blending of four qualities: indomitable energy, moral earnestness, gentle kindliness, and ardent piety. It was this character of singular dignity and elevation that secured for Bonar a place of honor and eminence among his contemporaries. The respect accorded to him was the spontaneous expression of the reverence which men felt for an exceptionally noble and impressive personality. Every generation produces a few outstanding examples of this type of minister, and every generation needs to be relentlessly reminded of such men whose lives are consumed by Christ's Gospel and transformed by its power. For this reason alone, he should not be forgotten.

The principal reason for remembering Horatius Bonar, however, is for his contribution to the hymnody of the whole Christian Church. Judged by any standard it is an impressive monument to his memory. When all the sermons, theological disputes, and ecclesiastical controversies of the nineteenth century have been forgotten, we, and the generations yet unborn, will regard Horatius Bonar as one in whose hymns of faith and hope mankind heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto Me and rest."

I may not stay. These hills that smile around me
Are full of music, and its happy glow
Beckons me upward; all that here has bound me
Seems now dissolving; daily I outgrow
The chains and drags of earth. I rise, I go, I go!

- Horatius Bonar

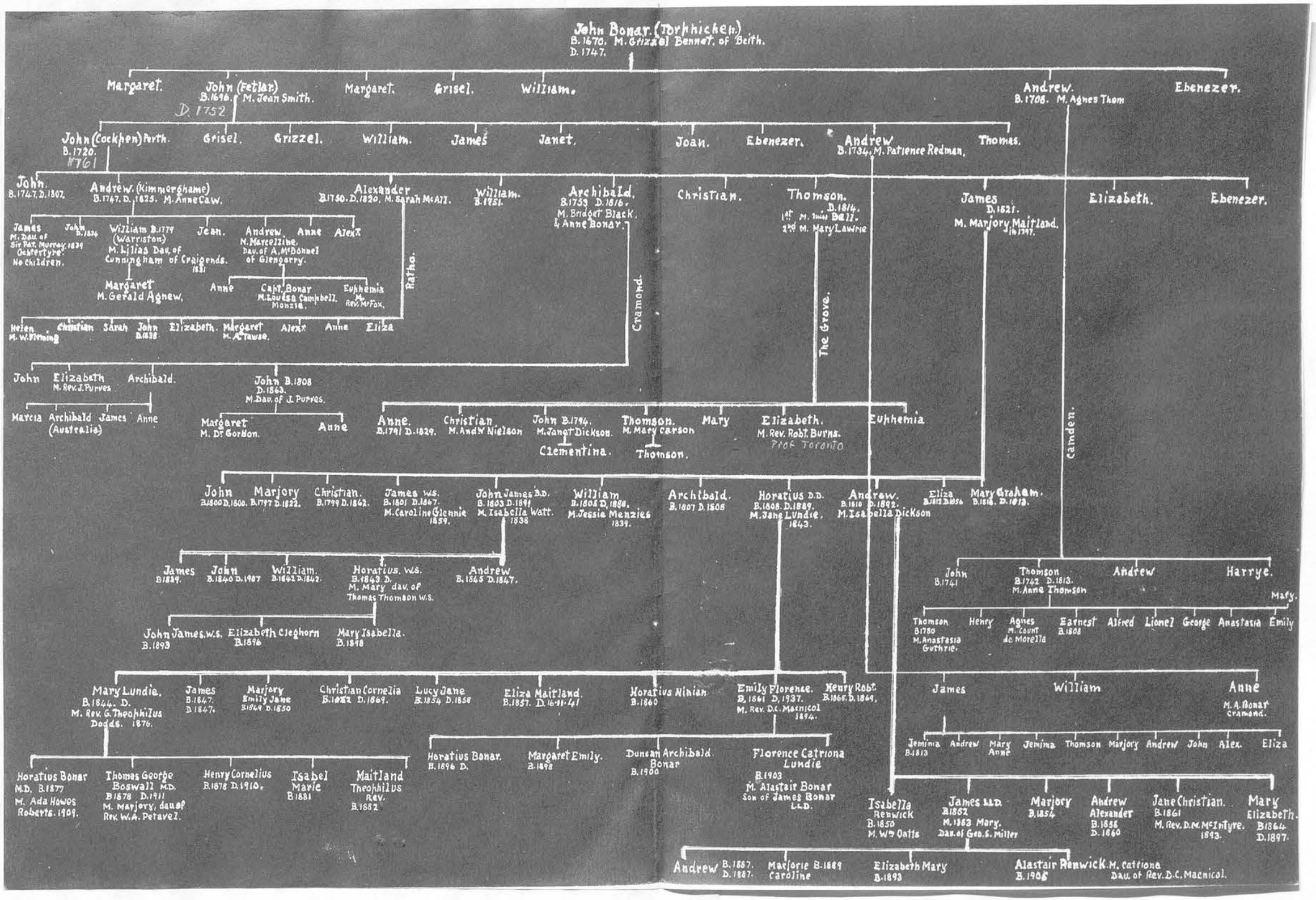
His message to his age through his character, through his life, through his voice, and through his pen, was a full, clear, and constant commendation of Christ, as the all in all of a true human life, and the fruitfulness of his message was abundant.

- Rev. George Wilson

"A vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

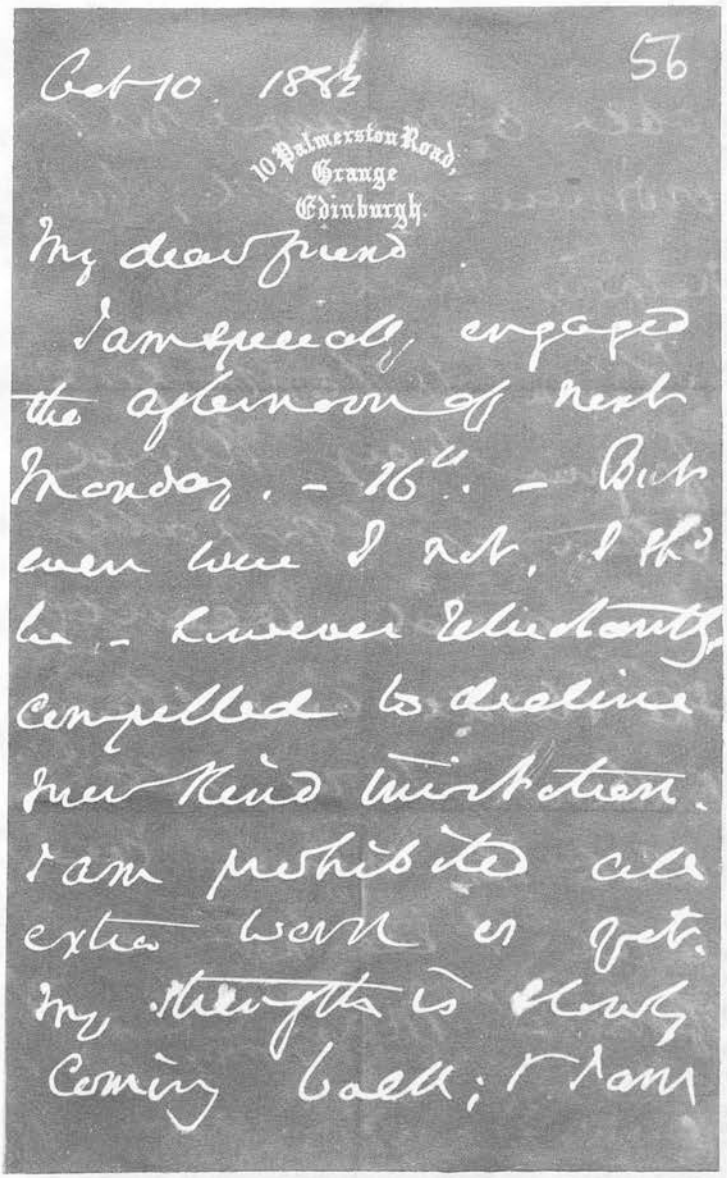
- 2 Tim. 2,21

APPENDIX



A. BONAR FAMILY TREE

(Through the courtesy of Dr. Duncan Archibald Bonar Macnicol)



Oct 10. 1862 56

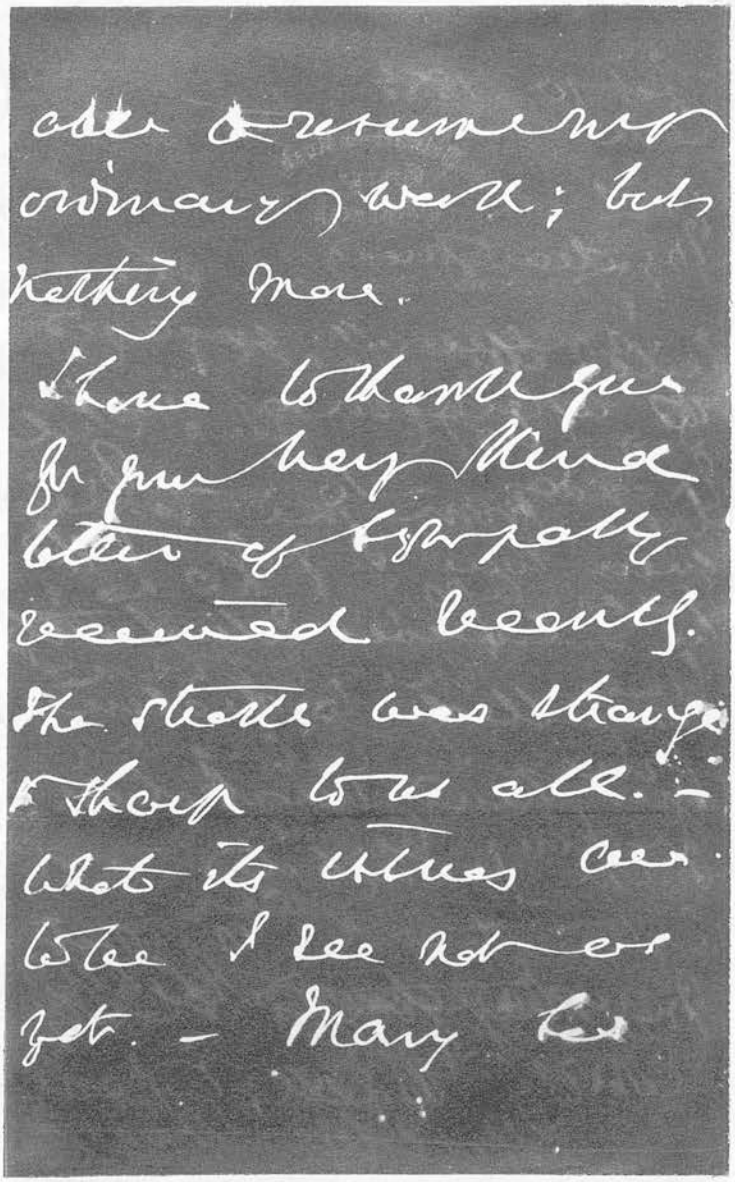
10 Palmerston Road,
Grange
Edinburgh.

My dear friend

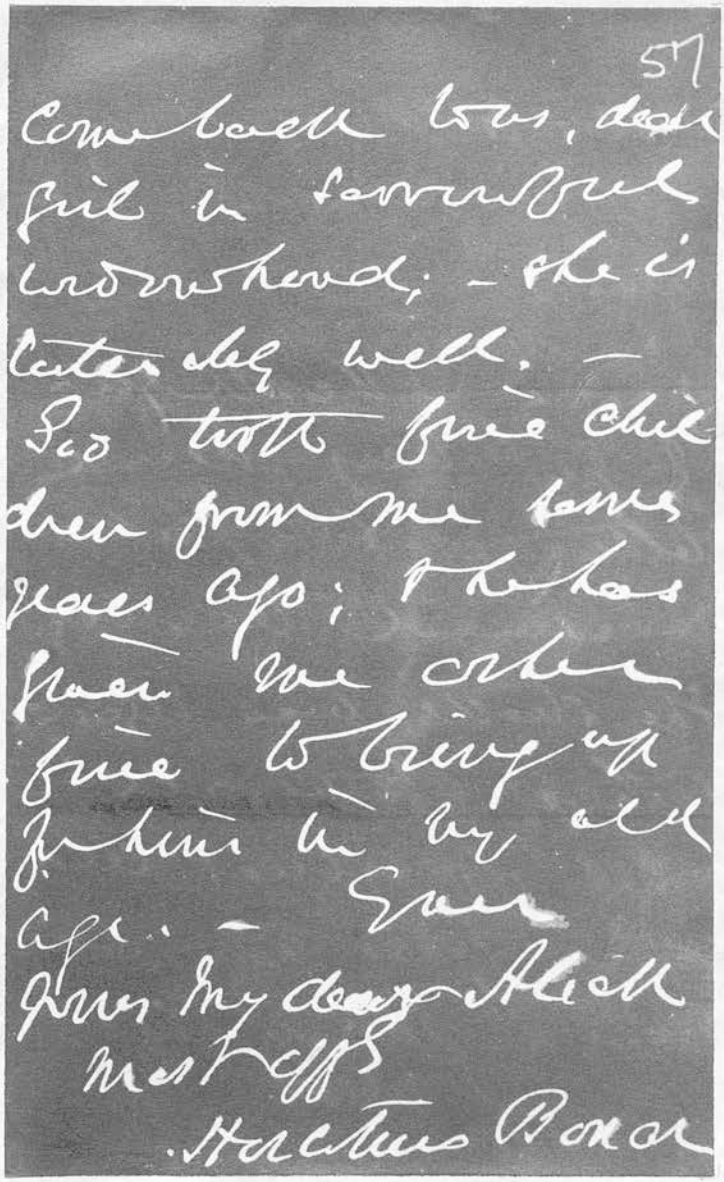
I am specially engaged the afternoon of next Monday. - 16th. - But even were I not, I fear to be - however reluctantly, compelled to decline your kind invitation. I am prohibited all extra work or fatigue. My strength is slowly coming back; & I am

B. LETTER TO DR. A. N. SOMERVILLE

(Manuscript in the National Library of Scotland)

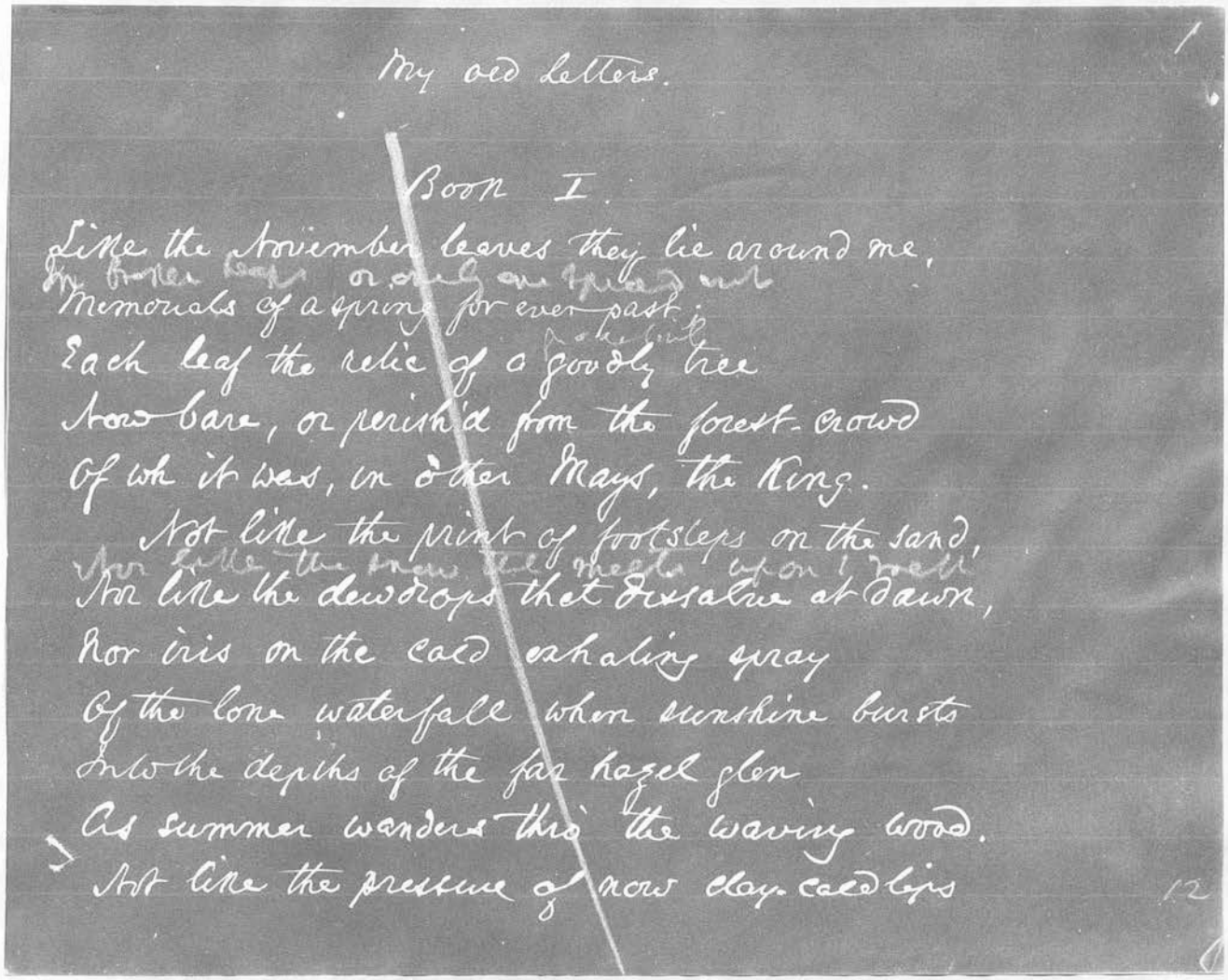


ode & returned
ordinary work; but
nothing more.
I have to thank you
for your very kind
letter & especially
seemed heavy.
The storm was strong
& though to us all. —
What its ultimate
to be I see not as
yet. — Many



57

Come back to us, dear
girl in safety & perfect
understanding; - she is
getting on well. -
I do wish some chil-
dren from me some
years ago; I have
given me others
some to bring up
future in my old
age. - Ever
Yours my dear Alice
Most affy
Harriet Bowar



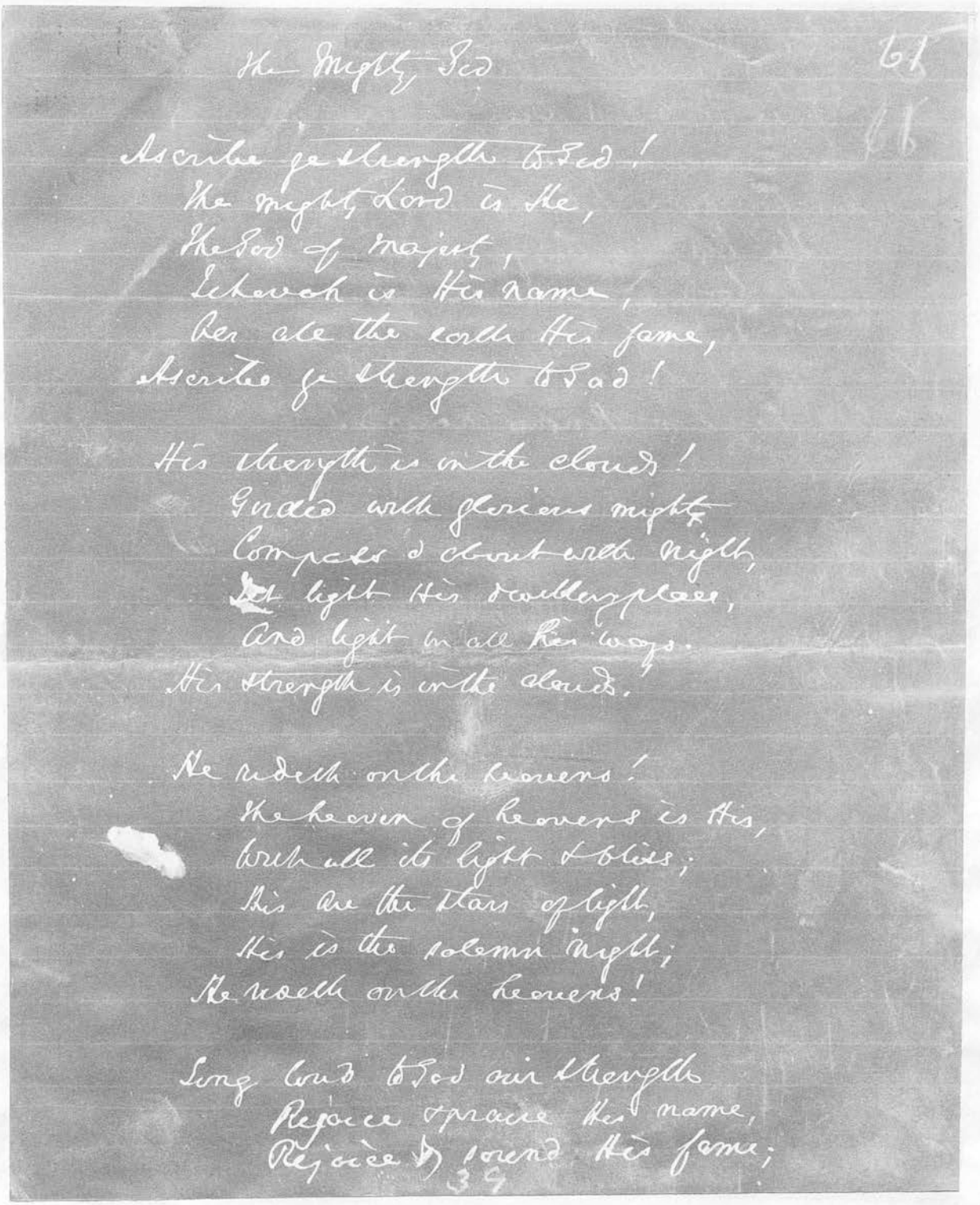
My old letters.

Book I.

Like the November leaves they lie around me,
Memorials of a spring for ever past;
Each leaf the relic of a goodly tree
Now bare, or perish'd from the forest-crowd
Of wh it was, in other Mays, the King.
Not like the print of footsteps on the sand,
Nor like the dewdrops that dissolve at dawn,
Nor iris on the cold exhaling spray
Of the lone waterfall when sunshine bursts
Into the depths of the far hazel glen
As summer wanders thro' the waving wood.
Not like the pressure of raw clay-cold lips

C. FIRST PAGE OF MY OLD LETTERS

(Through the courtesy of Dr. Duncan Archibald Bonar Macnicol)



The Mighty God

61

Ascribe ye strength to God!
The mighty Lord is He,
The God of majesty,
Jehovah is His name,
Let all the earth His fame,
Ascribe ye strength to God!

His strength is in the clouds!
Girded with glorious might
Compass'd about with light,
His light His dwelling place,
And light in all His ways.
His strength is in the clouds.

He rideth on the heavens!
The heaven of heavens is His,
With all its light & skies;
His are the stars of light,
His is the solemn night;
He rideth on the heavens!

Sing unto God our strength
Rejoice & praise His name,
Rejoice & sound His fame;

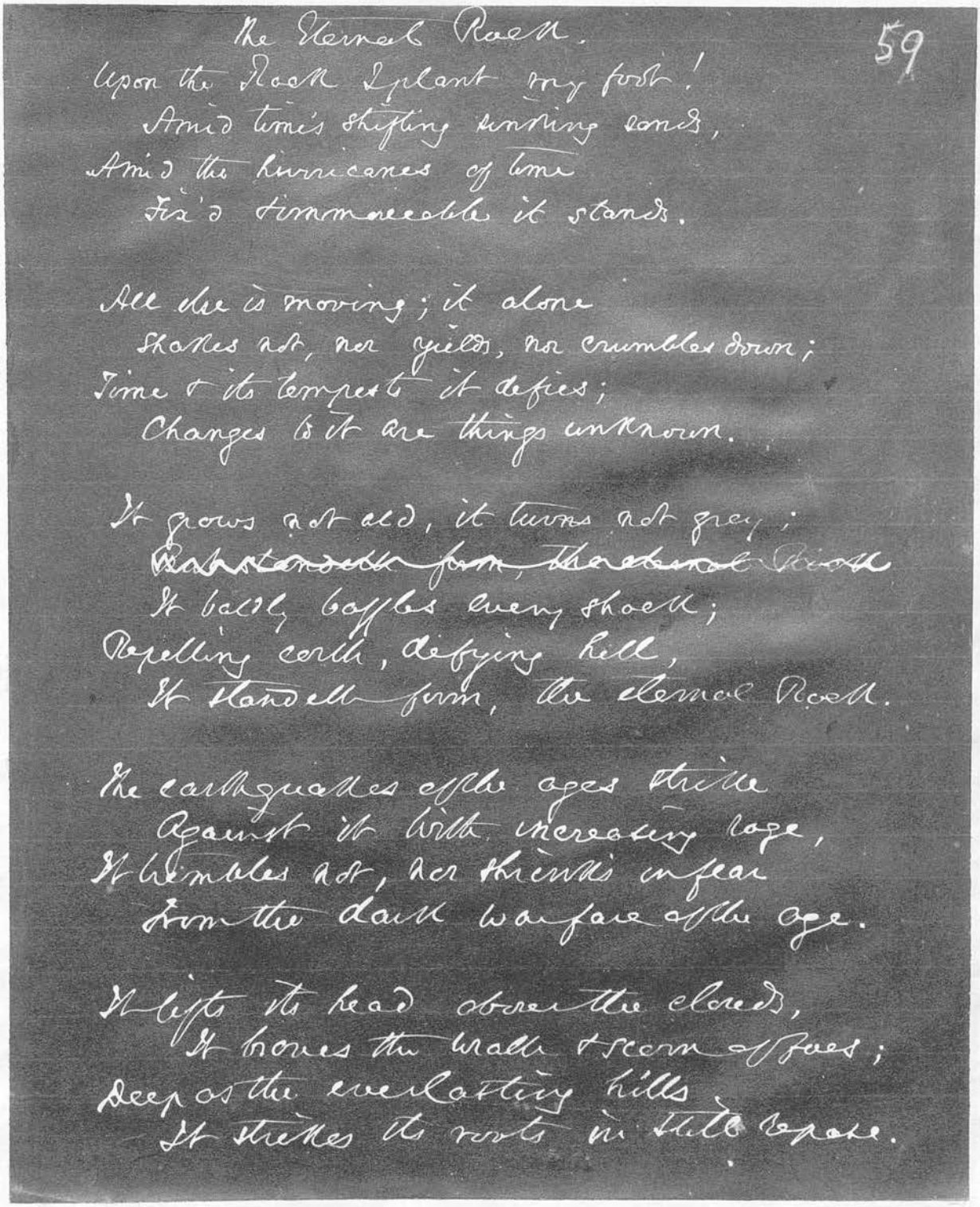
39

D. COPY OF HYMN "THE MIGHTY GOD"

(Manuscript in the National Library of Scotland)

Rejoice & tell His grace
Rejoice before His face;—
Sing loud to God our strength!

His Kingdom knows no end!
The King of Kings is He.
The Lord of Lords is He.
The God of Gods is He.
The Judge of earth is He.
His Kingdom knows no end!



The Eternal Rock. 59

Upon the Rock I plant my feet!
Amid time's shifting sinking sands,
Amid the hurricanes of time
Fix'd immoveable it stands.

All else is moving; it alone
Shakes not, nor yields, nor crumbles down;
Time & its tempests it defies;
Changes to it are things unknown.

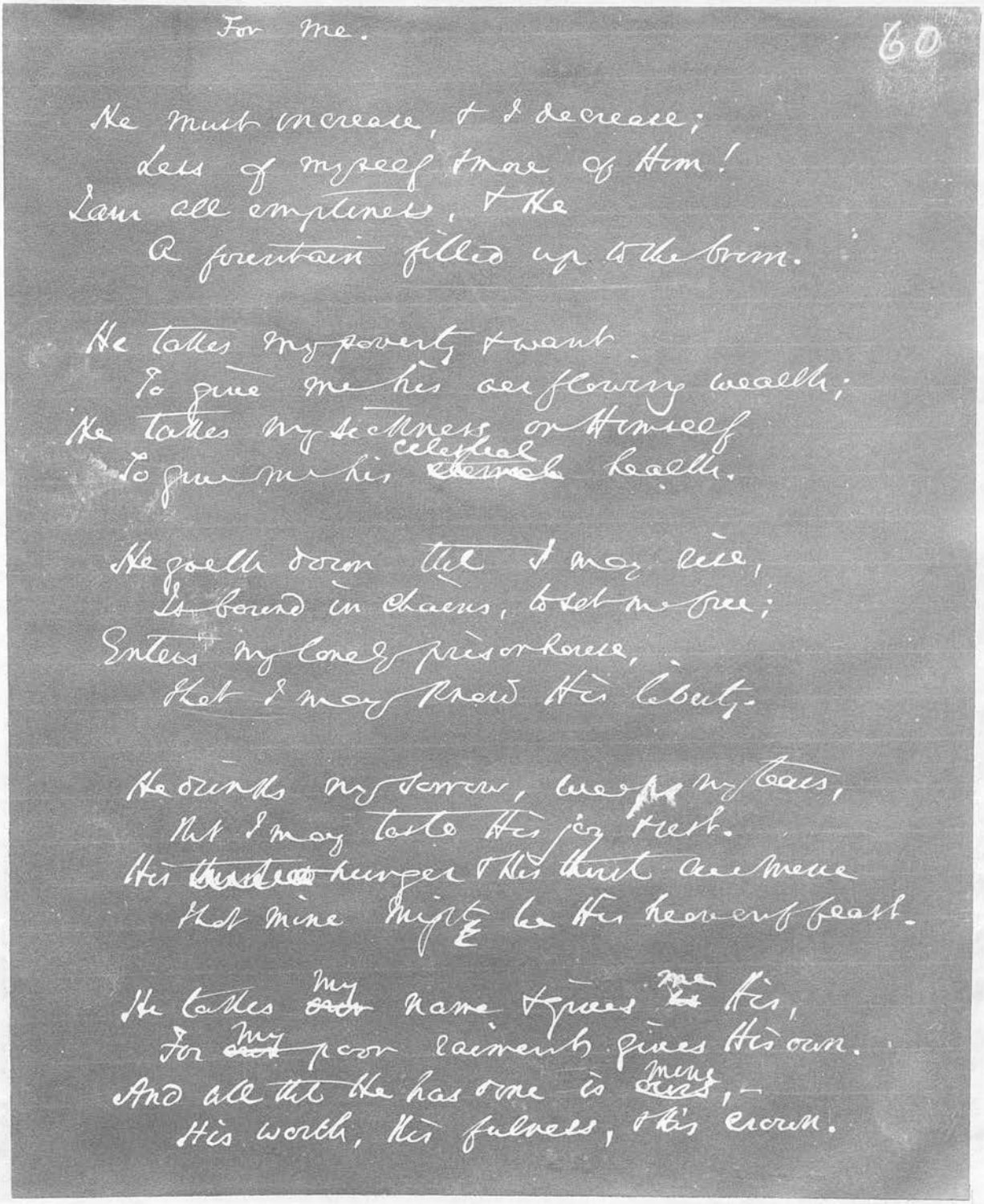
It grows not old, it turns not grey;
~~Unbroken from the eternal Rock~~
It badly baffles every shock;
Repelling earth, defying hell,
It stands all firm, the eternal Rock.

The earthquakes of the ages strike
Against it with increasing rage,
It trembles not, nor shrinks in fear
From the dark warfare of the age.

It lifts its head above the clouds,
It knows the walk & storm of foes;
Deep as the everlasting hills
It strikes its roots in Christ repose.

E. COPY OF HYMN "THE ETERNAL ROCK"

(Manuscript in the National Library of Scotland)



For me. 60

He must increase, & I decrease;
less of myself more of Him!
Leave all emptiness, & He
A fountain filled up to the brim.

He takes my poverty & want
To give me his overflowing wealth;
He takes my sickness on Himself
To give me his ~~eternal~~ celestial health.

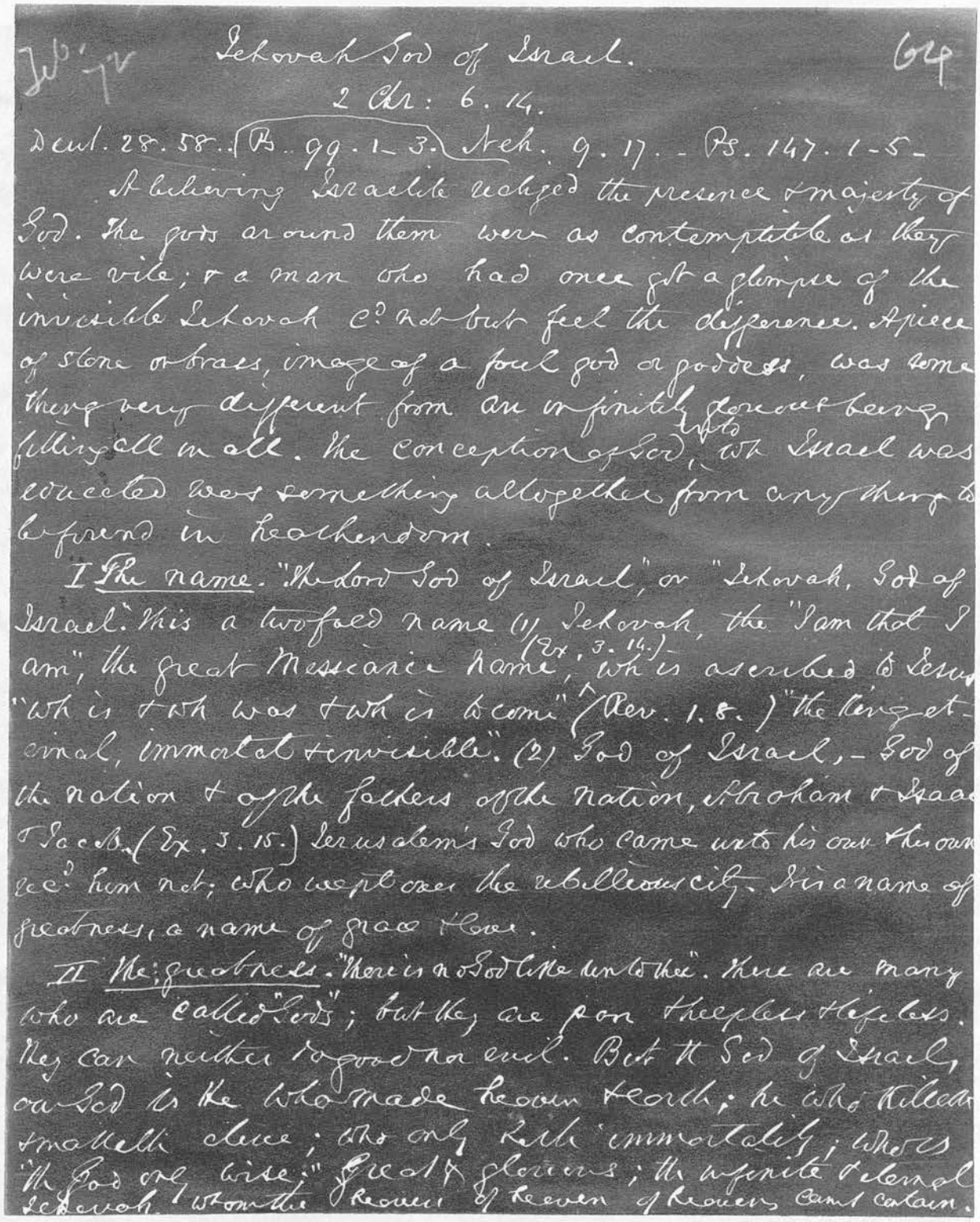
He goeth down that I may rise,
Is bound in chains, to set me free;
Enters my lonely prison house,
That I may reach His throne.

He drinks my sorrow, wears my tears,
That I may taste His joy & rest.
His thirst & hunger & His hurt are mine
That mine might be His heavenly feast.

He takes ~~my~~ my name & gives me His,
For ~~my~~ my poor raiment gives His own.
And all that He has mine is ~~ours~~ mine,—
His worth, His fulness, & His crown.

F. COPY OF HYMN "FOR ME"

(Manuscript in the National Library of Scotland)



Jehovah God of Israel. 64

2 Chr: 6. 14.

Deut. 28. 58. Ps. 99. 1-3. Neh. 9. 17. - Ps. 147. 1-5.

A believing Israelite realized the presence & majesty of God. The gods around them were as contemptible as they were vile; & a man who had once got a glimpse of the invisible Jehovah could not but feel the difference. A piece of stone or brass, image of a foul god a goddess, was some thing very different from an infinitely glorious being filling all in all. The conception of God, wh Israel was reared was something altogether from any thing to be found in heathendom.

I The name. "The Lord God of Israel", or "Jehovah, God of Israel". This a two faced name (1) Jehovah, the "I am that I am", the great Messianic name, (Ex. 3. 14.) wh is ascribed to Jesus "wh is & wh was & wh is to come" (Rev. 1. 8.) "the king eternal, immortal & invisible". (2) God of Israel, - God of the nation & of the fathers of the nation, Abraham & Isaac & Jacob. (Ex. 3. 15.) Jerusalem's God who came unto his own & his own rec'd him not; who wept over the rebellious city. It is a name of greatness, a name of grace & love.

II Its greatness. "There is no God like unto thee". There are many who are called "Gods"; but they are poor theepless lifeless. They can neither do good nor evil. But the God of Israel, our God is he who made heaven & earth; he who kills & makes alive; who only hath immortality; who is "the God only wise;" Great & glorious; the infinite & eternal Jehovah, "the King of Kings & Lord of Lords, Most Mighty.

G. COPY OF SERMON "JEHOVAH GOD OF ISRAEL"

(Manuscript in the National Library of Scotland)

III. His faithfulness. He "keepeth Covenant". He made a covenant with Abraham, an everlasting Covenant, a covenant upon oath, a cov^t sealed with blood. Gen. 17. 8. Deut. 29. 12, 13. Acts 3. 25. 26.) Frequently does the word "truth" occur in the O. T. especially the Psalms; & "truth" means faithfulness & this word, - Covenant. Keeping (Ps. 105. 7 - 10) All his promises are yea, & in Him Amen. He seeks no promises.

IV. His Mercy. It is mercy all but special to his servants He is the Saviour of all specially of them that believe" (1 Tim. 4. 10) Mercy was wrapt up in the first promise, & in every promise from that day. Merciful & gracious is the name of Jehovah God of Israel. His tender mercies are over all his works. He keepeth mercy for thousands; long suffering is the death of the wicked; not willing that any shd perish but that all shd come to repentance.

It is with this Book that we have to do & through Him who gives us to share in his covenant.

(1) He is Israels God. As much he is our redeeming God; the God who covenanted with Israel covenants with us.

(2) He is great. The God of Gods is He! What a God to have upon our side; but what a God to have against us!

(3) He is gracious. He is rich in mercy; full of that free love wh a sinner needs & He delights to shew forth.

(4) He keeps his word. He seeks no promises. When he says "Come, he means what he says! when he warns & threatens, he is no less true & faithful. He requires us to be faithful to him. Kiss the Son!

H. BONAR'S HYMNS IN REPRESENTATIVE MODERN HYMNALS

The Church Hymnary (Church of Scotland)

7	Glory be to God the Father
104	By the Cross of Jesus standing
169	Blessing and honour and glory and power
171	Light of the world, forever, ever shining
255	When the weary seeking rest
323	Here, O My Lord, I see thee face to face
356	Go; labour on: spend and be spent
410	I heard the voice of Jesus say
429	Not what I am, O Lord, but what thou art
488	Beloved, let us love: love is of God
514	Through good report and evil, Lord
522	He liveth long who liveth well
553	Thy way, not mine, O Lord
650	Father, our children keep
694	I lay my sins on Jesus

The Methodist Hymnal, Official Hymnal of the Methodist Church in the United States of America

210	I heard the voice of Jesus say
230	I lay my sins on Jesus
292	Go, labor on
333	No, not despairingly come I to Thee
415	Here, O My Lord, I see thee face to face

The Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America

206	This is the hour, too soon we rise
208	Here, O My Lord, I see thee face to face
424	I heard the voice of Jesus say
457	O Love that casts out fear
573	Go, labor on

The Methodist Hymn-Book, Methodist Conference of Britain

52	O Love of God how strong and true
81	Not what these hands have done
95	Jesus son and shield art thou
112	I bless the Christ of God
154	I heard the voice of Jesus say
230	Rejoice and be glad
354	No, not despairingly
444	Beloved let us love: love is of God
515	Thy way, not mine, O Lord
589	Go labor on
604	Fill thou my life
735	When the weary seeking rest
772	Here, O My Lord, I see thee face to face

The English Hymnal (Church of England)

312 Here, O My Lord, I see thee face to face
361 A few more years shall roll
505 Thy way, not mine, O Lord
556 Go labor on
574 I heard the voice of Jesus say
575 I lay my sins on Jesus

The Hymnal of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America.

60 Glory be to God the Father
188 O'er the distant mountains breaking
196 Blessing and honor and glory and power
236 I heard the voice of Jesus say
352 Father, hear us we pray
376 Go, labor on
428 Upward where the stars are burning
500 Beloved, let us love: love is of God

H. Augustine Smith, ed., Hymns for the Living Age

81 O everlasting light
195 I heard the voice of Jesus say
221 When the weary seeking rest
245 O love that casts out fear
251 Thy way, not mine, O Lord
292 Fill thou my life, O Lord
396 Go, labor on
452 Here, O My Lord, I see thee face to face
478 Upward where the stars are shining

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5. Manuscripts

Manuscripts by Bonar will be found in the following libraries:**

New College Library, Edinburgh: A large number of unclassified hymns, sermons, and letters.

Edinburgh University Library: Letters to David Laing, 18 Sept and 22 Oct, 1866 about the Bonar family.

The National Library of Scotland: A number of hymns, sermons, and letters.

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The great majority of Bonar's manuscripts, personal letters, etc., were destroyed in 1941 on the death of his daughter. The few remaining are in possession of Dr. Duncan Archibald Bonar Macnicol, Edinburgh. He has kindly granted me the use of them for this study.

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